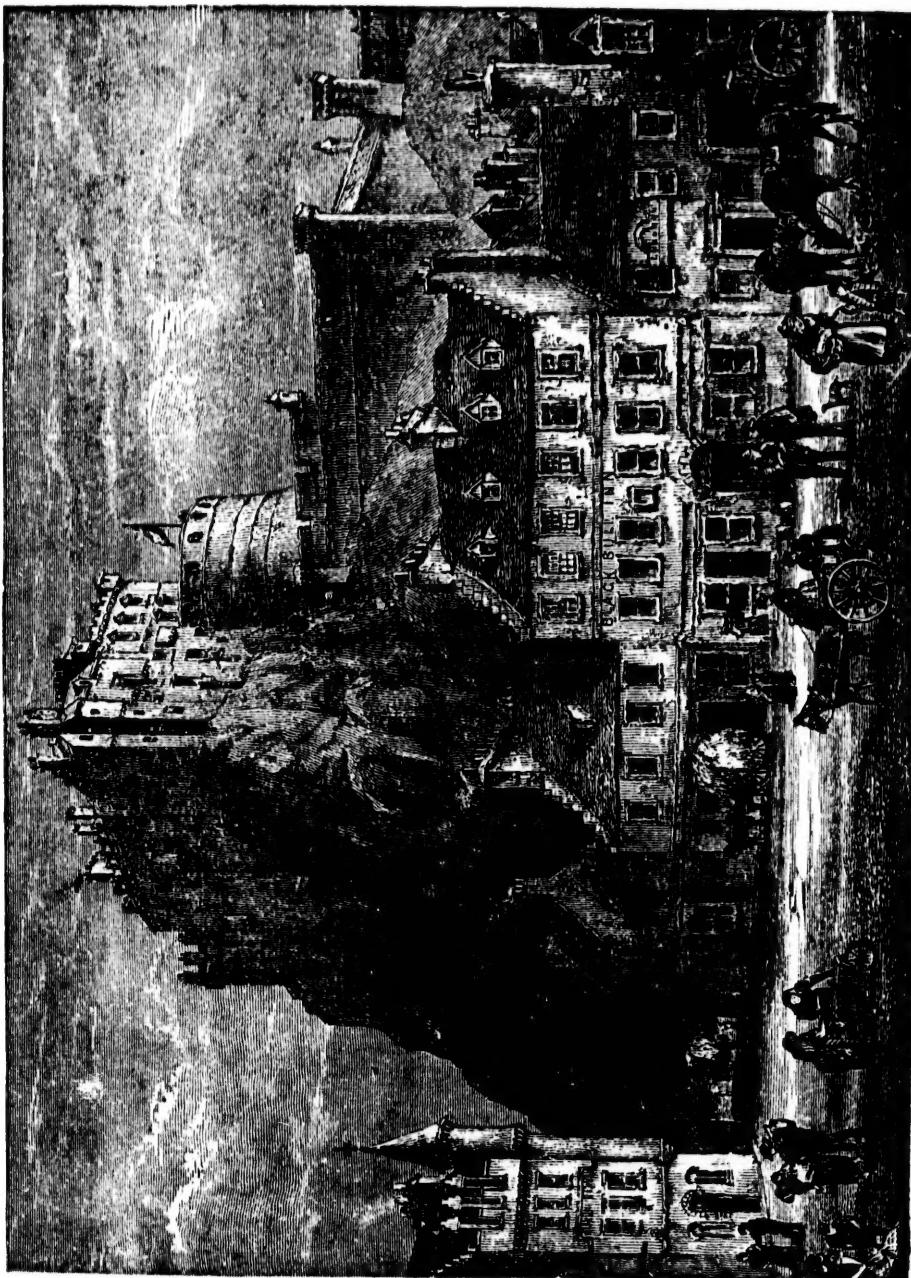


JOCK HALLIDAY.



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JOCK HALLIDAY

A Grassmarket Hero

OR

*SKETCHES OF LIFE AND CHARACTER
IN AN OLD CITY PARISH*

BY ROBINA F. HARDY

AUTHOR OF 'NANNETTE'S NEW SHOES,' 'WHINBLOOM,' ETC. ETC.

'That is best which lieth nearest ;—

Shape from that thy work of art.'

—LONGFELLOW

SEVENTH EDITION.

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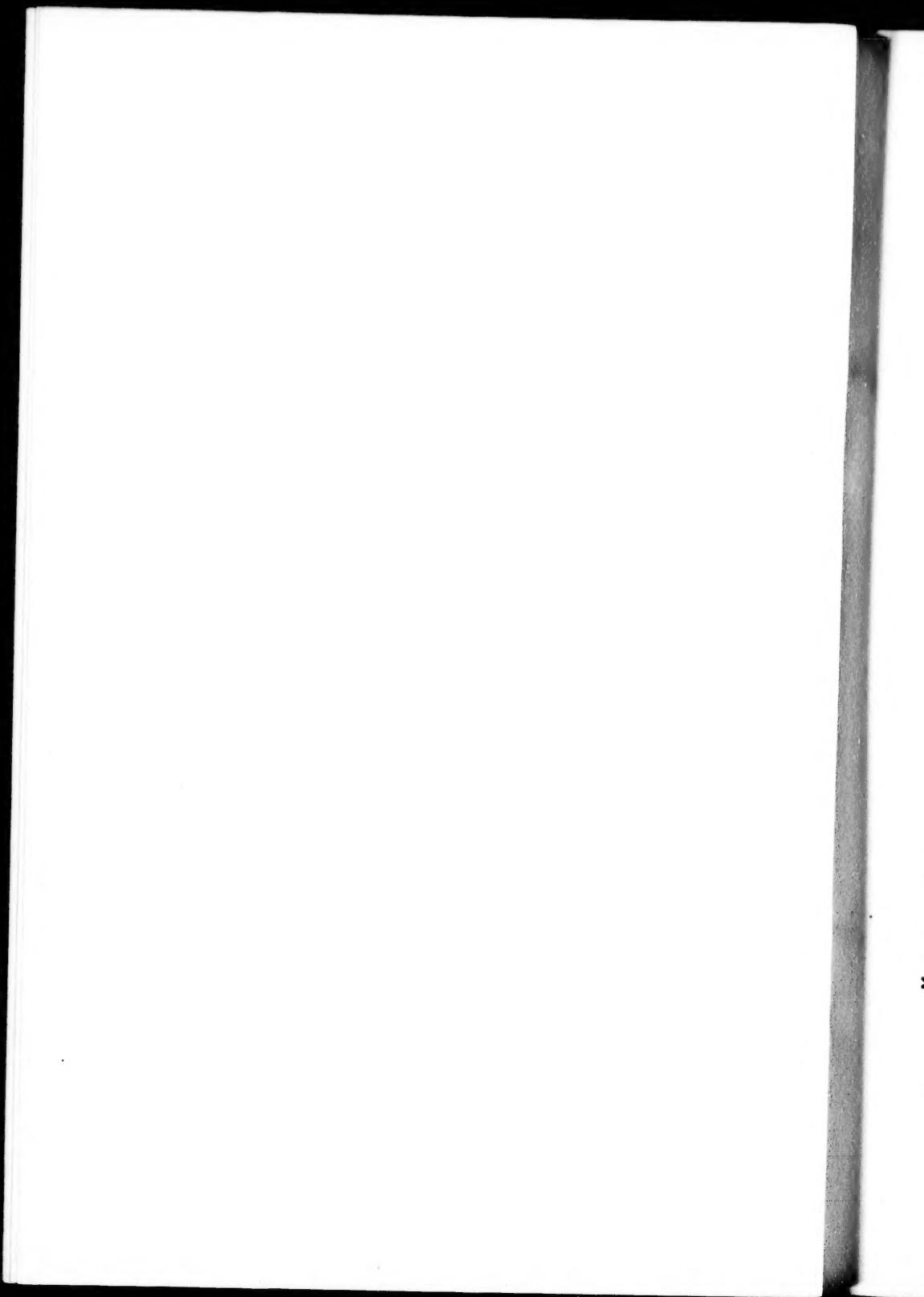
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WILLIAM BRIGGS, in the Office of the Minister of Agriculture,
at Ottawa.

TO THE MEMORY OF
A GOOD MINISTER
WHO LABOURED LONG AND EARNESTLY IN THE
'OLD CITY PARISH,'
THESE SKETCHES OF THE PEOPLE AND PLACE HE LOVED
SO WELL, ARE NOW AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.





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b



JOCK HALLIDAY.

' Had any tried his face to scan,
" A common man ! " you would have said.
Thank God ! he was—a *common man* !'

—ISA CRAIG'S *Poems*.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE IN NUMBER NINETY-SEVEN— JOCK INTRODUCED.

'  AE wa' wi' ye this meenit, or I'll send for
the pollis ! '

This awful threat came from Lucky Law, greengrocer and general merchant in the Grassmarket, and was hurled at the head of a rough-looking boy named Jock Halliday, whose attentions were rather familiar to be pleasant. Jock was a baker's boy, and having to pass Lucky's corner frequently in the discharge of his duties, made a point of peering in at her low doorway, and often indulged in a free criticism of her stock-in-trade, her actions, or whatever took his fancy at the moment.

'Luck—y Law! Luck—y Law!' he had sung out on this occasion, imitating the crowing of a cock, that being a favourite serenade of Jock's; and no sooner had he sounded the first note than Lucky's huge frilled nightcap appeared at the door, and the rack of withered vegetables beside her shook violently as if in anticipation of the coming storm. It was a red and angry face that filled the nightcap, and Lucky's figure was tall, bony, and masculine; so it was no wonder that Jock Halliday showed signs of a quick retreat.

'A body canna get a mouthfu' o' meat ta'en in peace for yer impudence!' cried the virago. 'See if I dinna tell yer maister o' yer tricks, ye idle loon!'

'He kens them fine, Lucky! ye needna fash yersel'!' rejoined the youth with charming candour.

It was, indeed, highly probable that Mr. Braid, the baker, knew from sad experience the character of his youthful assistant.

A customer appearing at this moment, Lucky descended her two or three steps again, and ushered her into the well-filled premises below. It was a low-roofed shop, divided into two by a slight partition—the one part entirely occupied by a huge brown counter, two or three racks or ranges filled with carrots, turnips, and any other vegetables in season. Some shelves also displayed a store of

bath-brick, pipe-clay, and such articles dear to the hearts of cleanly housewives ; while a barrel of yellow sand, and one of oatmeal, loomed darkly out from the far end of the shop. It was said—but the neighbours were doubtless rather ill-tongued—that Miss Law used only one scoop for these two barrels, diverse though their contents were ; but even if it were so, she was a person of clear judgment and much discrimination, and probably never made any mistake in serving them out ! The other half of the shop was devoted to the private life and affairs of the owner, with the exception of a large mangle, by which a good deal of her modest income was earned. At the window of this department, which also looked out to the street, Jock Halliday now flattened his nose, and as soon as the customer was served renewed his attack upon Lucky.

'Eh ! she's bilin' up the auld kail runts !' was his next sally, having observed a pot boiling on the little fire. 'They've a fine smell, Lucky ! Ye'll no be gaun to keep them for Scobie's swine this week ?'

'Ye ne'er-do-weel varlet ! I'll gie ye something to taste yer ain kail wi', that will I !' cried the old dame, diving under the counter, and bringing forward a tin pitcher, apparently filled with greasy water and vegetable refuse, which was probably destined for 'Scobie's swine.' This she affected to

aim at the head of her tormentor, who now took to his heels in earnest, leaving Lucky Law mistress of the situation.

Jock went off at a good rate, dashing round a corner of the street, and then ran up the first stair after that, whistling as he went, and occasionally jumping up two or three steps at a time. It was a dark and dirty stair of five long flights. Jock's home was at the very top, but he had still time for some diversion before seeking it. On the first landing, and in a deep window recess, some six or seven small children were playing. Jock pulled the hair of one, made a wry face at another, and rubbed his floury 'bannet' over the face of a third. Of course they all howled and shouted in consequence, though they seemed rather to enjoy it than otherwise. Certainly they were well used to these performances. However, Jock had no sooner left them than a 'touzy'-looking matron, of portly form and flowing drapery, emerged from her own dwelling on to the landing, and addressed—it might be the children, or it might be the general public, for her tones were loud enough to reach the street :

'Noo, this'll no dae! I canna bide a' this steer an' confusion, an' what's mair, I'll no pit up wi' it!'

'It's no huz,' whined the children. 'It was Jock Halliday!'

'A body might weel ken it's Jock Halliday whenever there's a din i' the stair—a regiment o' dragoons is naething till him!'

The matron 'skirled' out this more loudly still, turning her head towards the angle of the stair, where, as she fully expected, Jock was listening. She had her reward.

'Tam Lowrie's wife's an unco wife!' struck up the musical youth.

This was a popular refrain in the stair, chanted to a wild irregular tune, and was one well known to Mrs. Lowrie, who naturally resented it with some asperity. Its origin, like that of many popular ballads and ditties, was unknown or obscure. The heroine made a feint of pursuing Jock up the stair, but was interrupted.

'Is that you, Mrs. Lowrie?' cried a woman from below, who had just entered the 'stair-fit.' She had a shawl thrown over her head, and had evidently just crossed the street on some little errand. 'Are my Geordie's buits ready yet frae the mendin'? I've just comed ower for them, for the laddie canna want them nae langer.'

'Bide a wee, Mrs. Fairlie, an' I'll speir at the gudeman,' returned Mrs. Lowrie, disappearing into her own demesne.

After a brief colloquy with the redoubtable 'Tam,' she again emerged, but with looks prepared

for either diplomacy or defiance. The boots were evidently not ready!

'Deed they're no jist dune, Mrs. Fairlie. Were ye in ony parteeklar hurry, like?'

'*Hurry!*' re-echoed the voice from the entry; 'I dinna ken what ye ca' hurry. Geordie's waited this three weeks an' mair. This is a fine time to talk o' hurry, I assure ye!'

'Weel, weel, woman, ye needna be angry. The gudeman's just been sair put aboot wi' stress o' business this while back.'

'Ay, indeed!' said Mrs. Fairlie dryly. 'I thocht I had seen him ilka nicht gangin' ower to the Haurrow Inn. I maun hae been mista'en.'

'He micht be there and he micht no,' said Tam Lowrie's wife, lounging over the railings with her arms akimbo, and prepared for defiance now that diplomacy had failed; 'but I can tell ye, my man has mair important affairs to mind than your laddie's buits at a time like this, when the nation's gaun clean wrang a' thegither.'

'Wheesht, woman!' growled a voice from within, 'an' dinna ye try to meddle wi' politeeks.'

It was perhaps as well that Tam stopped the tide of his wife's eloquence, for her views were by no means clear on 'politeeks.'

'Maister Lowrie 'll be gaun up to Paurliment himsel' sune, likely,' cried Mrs. Fairlie in her most

sarcastic tones. 'He'd better gie back Geordie's buits as they are, an' Rob Ryan the cobbler up by'll be gled to dae them. They tell me he's gettin' into a fine business—he's rael steady, an' aye at his wark.'

'He'll ne'er haud the caundle to Tam for solin' an' heelin', ' shrieked Mrs. Lowrie in reply; 'but he's maist welcome to you an' a' your custom from this day forth! I'm sure there's aye mair steer aboot your folk's shoon than a' the rest o' the customers pitten thegither!'

The colloquy was here ended, however, by the appearance of a rough head of hair and very bloated countenance, just seen over the landing, and a deep, gruff voice saying:

'I'll have them seenished the morn's nicht, Mrs. Fairlie, if that'll dae. They'll mak a gude strong pair yet for mony a day.'

Mrs. Fairlie was evidently mollified.

'Vera weel, Maister Lowrie! I'll send up Geordie the morn's nicht, an' if they're ready we'll hae nae mair words aboot it.'

Mrs. Lowrie had beat a rapid retreat, perhaps a little ashamed of her own rashness, and Mrs. Fairlie herself was not slow to quit the field.

We must now follow Jock Halliday, who has by this time gained the very top of the stairs, and is seated at his mother's fireside.

'What's keepit ye, Jock?' demanded his mother, a broad, comely-faced woman, but exceedingly 'hashy' in her appearance and dress. She stood leaning on a long besom with which she had been raking out some corners of her garret, for it was one of Mrs. Halliday's characteristics to be always in process of 'redding up,' although her house remained usually to the last degree confused and comfortless. 'What's keepit ye? I had to gie the weans their denner, but there's your bite waitin' for ye.'

Jock's 'bite' was in a little basin by the fire, and seemed to be an indiscriminate jumble of brose, bacon, and fried liver. It was tolerably hot in spite of Jock's late arrival, and he could hardly be said to have deserved so much grace, considering the idle way in which his leisure moments had been spent.

He sat down at once on the fender and attacked the mess ravenously, eating in perfect silence, while his mother went on with her sweeping, stopping now and then to ask a question of her son, at other times singing in a high shrill voice some favourite national melody.

'Noo, Jock,' she began whenever she saw him on his feet to depart, 'there's ae thing I hae to say to ye.'

Mrs. Halliday again leaned on her besom-shank,

and Jock 'glowered' with no pleasing forebodings written on his face.

'Thae new folk that's come to the stair—ben the hoose, ye ken. Bruce they ca' them.'

'Ay, weel.'

'They're real ceevil, canny-like folk, ye ken.'

'What for no?' Jock growled suspiciously, but it was a good-humoured sort of growl.

'Ye'll keep a ceevil tongue in yer heid gin ye meet in wi' them, like a gude lad?'

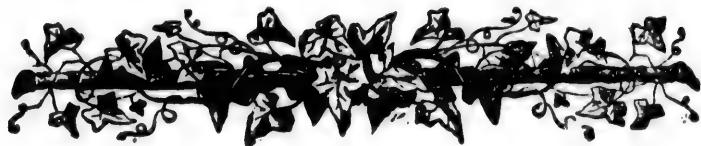
'Ou ay,' quoth Jock indifferently.

'An' ye'll no fricht their wee lassie like ye fricht the other bairns i' the stair?'

'*The blind lassie*, mother? I daursay ye think I'm a vaigabond!'

'Aweel, Jock, my man, ye're whiles gey like ane, laughed the mother as Jock went whistling down the stairs.





CHAPTER II.

A VISIT TO THE RAMPARTS.



"MONS MEG."

ONE bright April morning, soon after the events recorded in the last chapter, a young woman, with a baby in her arms and a little girl holding by her dress, might have been seen wending her way slowly down the stair which was so often enlivened by Jock Halliday's pranks and by Mrs. Lowrie's eloquence. She looked timidly around her, as if everything were somewhat new and strange,

and only gave a civil 'good day' to any passing neighbour. But the stairs were very quiet just then, and the trio went almost unnoticed. From the Candlemaker Row, at the foot of which their dwelling lay, Mrs. Bruce, for it was she, pushed her way up the winding street known as the West Bow, and presently emerged on to the ancient High Street, that steep, ridgy ascent leading up to the Castle-yard.

The sun was shining merrily on the grey walls and the many towers of the Scottish metropolis. Merrily, too, the jingling chimes of St. Giles—its grand old Cathedral Church—rang out the hour of noon, accompanying it with a feeble fantasia, said by the initiated to be 'The Blue Bells of Scotland,' alternating with 'Home! Sweet Home!'

But the High Street had other and more stirring strains to enliven it just then, for a band of the 42nd Highlanders—'The Black Watch'—was marching up in all the glory of fife and drum and fluttering tartans, and followed, of course, by an admiring throng 'rag-tag and bobtail,' while many a window on either side was blocked up by a 'toozy' head or two, or a white 'mutch.' Added to all these, there was the usual hum of busy life—the noise of traffic and commerce—the cries of coal-carters, fishwives, and hucksters—all testifying to the great fact that 'Auld Reekie' was alive and flourishing.

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Mrs. Bruce seemed well-nigh bewildered by these unusual sounds, though she still held bravely on her way towards the Castle. But the little girl by her side stood still, enraptured, as the Highlanders came near, clapping her hands and crying :

'Oh ! mither, mither ! that's bonnie music, bonnie music !'

'Ay, Effie, it's rael bonnie ; but wait or we win by this crood, an' syne we'll stop.'

'Come in here, neighbour,' said a strange voice by her side ; 'it's a covered place, an' safer for the bairns.'

It was an old woman who spoke, tall and ungainly of aspect, clad in a shabby dress and faded tartan shawl, yet with something honest and independent-looking about her. She was sheltering herself under the wide arch of Mylne's Court—a fashionable resort in days gone by, but now only a swarm of dirty and miserable dwellings.

'Come in here,' she repeated ; and Mrs. Bruce gladly obeyed the advice, after a hasty glance had assured her that it was one of her neighbours who spoke, and one of whom she had heard a fair enough report.

'Ye're a neighbour o' mine,' said Jean Campbell, 'though maybe ye know it not, for I have been away on my travels since ye came to the stair.'

Jean spoke with a strong north-country accent of a somewhat peculiar nature, but expressed herself well for one of her order, seldom using the broad Scotch, or rather the 'low Edinburgh,' prevalent around her.

'Your name's Bruce, isn't it?' inquired she in her abrupt manner.

'Ay; I'm thinkin' ye're the tenant next door to us. But I would hardly hae kenned ye again, for ilka thing's sae new an' strange to me in this toun; I'm just fair bewildered.'

'Your man works on the railway?' again interrogated her new friend.

'Ay, he's a platelayer on the line. He was that in the country place he cam' frae, an' they sent him on here. Willie thinks it's a gran' rise; but 'deed I'm whiles no verra sure.'

'Well, well, neighbour; nobody can say what will be best for them, or what will be worst for them, till they have tried. If a woman can't make herself happy in one place, it's my belief she'll never do it in any other; and Jean Campbell has seen more of this world's ups and downs than any of you three have done!'

Jean had worked herself into a sort of mild frenzy during these philosophic reflections, and now clenched her withered hands together, muttering to herself:

'Ay, ay! Jean could tell ye strange stories if she liked, but ye're maybe best without them. They are well off that have no story of their own to tell. But where are ye bound for?'

The last question was so sudden that Mrs. Bruce started.

'Bound for?' she repeated. 'To the Castle-yaird. My man bade me tak the bairns up there for a breath o' fresh air.'

Effie burst into tears at this moment.

'Mither, mither!' she wailed, 'the bonnie music's a' gane by.'

'Wheesht, wheesht, my wee wifie; ye'll hear them again at the Castle, maybe. But 'deed,' she added to Jean, 'I'm no verra keen to gang my lane. I dinna ken my way yet aboot the streets.'

'The Castell?' said the old woman meditatively. 'I am a kind of "gangin'-about body," as they say in the north country, and my business does as well in one place as another. 'Deed! I may well say that, for it never does very much anywhere. So, if ye care for the convoy of an old witch like Jean, I'll take ye safe to the Castell and help ye with the weans.'

'I'll be real gled,' said the younger woman, 'an' tak it verra kind o' ye to think on't. Will ye tak wee Effie's hand? Ye'll maybe no hae noticed that she's blind?'

'*Blind!*' exclaimed Jean. It was her turn to start this time, for she had noticed with interest the eyes of this little girl—so lustrous and beautiful were they, of the softest violet colour; and yet it never had occurred to her that they were but sightless eyes.

'Ay, woman, blind! Puir wee Effie hardly ever saw mair nor jist the licht o' day. But she's real clever for a' that, an' real canty tae.'

Jean said no more, but took the little hand of the blind child softly in her own horny palm, and started off towards the Castle-yard. The street was quieter now, and they made their way easily up the picturesque but dirty approach to the ancient fortress. In the yard some recruits were being drilled, and they watched them for a little, Effie eagerly picking up the various words of command, and imitating with her tiny feet the 'tramp, tramp' of the men as they passed and repassed. Then they went on, Jean pointing out the old portcullis gateway, the drawbridge, the moat, and all other places of interest. Upward still, past the officers' quarters, and up the steps till they reached at last the ramparts and stood beside 'Mons Meg,' that ancient relic of the warfare of other days, feeling the breezes blowing fresh and strong around them, as if they had suddenly arrived in some new climate altogether.

Here they all sat down to rest.

Behind them was the quaint little chapel built by St. Margaret, the godly queen of Malcolm Canmore, the smallest and the most ancient ecclesiastical building in Scotland; and in front of them stretched one of the most magnificent panoramas that the world can show.

At their feet lay the city, clearly defined as in a map, and proudly raising its countless spires and turrets from the shrouding silvery mist. On the right rose abruptly the Calton Hill, crowded with classic monuments; on the left, the pleasant slopes of Corstorphine Hill declined gradually into a long vista of cultured fields and wooded plains; while beyond all swept the blue waters of the winding Forth, swelling out into its wide and stately Firth, where white sails came and went, and rocky islands glittered in the sunlight.

The shores of Fife were clearly descried, and it was on these that the eyes of the young stranger rested most eagerly.

‘Bonnie Lairgo Bay!’ she said softly to herself, ‘what wad I no gie whiles to be there? I doubt we were fules to leave it.’

‘Mither, can ye see it frae here?’ asked the blind child earnestly.

‘No, Effie, no; but I see whaur it lies. I see Kinghorn Point stretchin’ oot into the water, an’ it’s just beyond that, ye ken.’

'Faither 'll tak us there some day, mither ; will he no ?'

'Ay, dearie ; but we maun hae some siller gathered first, sae ye maun hae patience. An' this is a braw toon an' a bonnie, ye ken, sae you an' wee Willie maun learn to like it.'

Jean Campbell had been lost in a brown study till now, sitting on the ramparts with her eyes fixed, not on the view around her, but on the little group by her side. She now broke silence in her abrupt and singular fashion.

'She's not your own bairn, though—that one,' she said, nodding in the direction of little Effie, who had strolled away a few steps and seated herself at the base of the old cannon.

Agnes Bruce coloured deeply.

'Hoo ken ye that?' she said in surprise. 'I thocht I treated her the same as my ain.'

'You're good to her, very good ; but it's never the same,' returned Jean in a decisive tone. 'A bairn can have but one mother. I had a stepmother myself, and a good one ; but it was never the same—it never can be. What's her story ?'

'Her story ? Nane, but jist that my Willie was married afore, and Effie's mother died when she was born—that's a'. They say she was a bonnie lassie, an' as guid as she was fair ; but I never saw her, for a' we belanged to the same pairish. She lies buried

ower yonder,' she added, bending her head in the direction of Largo.

'Ay, ay!' was the only comment Jean chose to make as she still sat coolly surveying the features of her new friend. There was a look of truth and goodness in this young countrywoman's homely face that could not be mistaken. She was, in fact, only too simple and trustful for the sort of people among whom she had come to dwell, and Jean—not extra particular for herself—saw and regretted this.

'I'm real vexed ye could tell she wasna my ain,' said the young mother, tears rising to her eyes as she spoke. 'Unless it might be frae her luiks, for Effie's like her ain mother, an' she was bonnie by me! But maybe I'm no sae kind to the bit lassie as I thocht I was!'

'Woman, I said *ye* were good to her, *very* good,' said Jean sternly. 'But look into your own infant's face and tell me if they are the same to *ye*!'

The baby was smiling and crowing, doing his very best to captivate a doting mother's fancy. Agnes Bruce looked long and steadily, first on the one child, then on the other.

'I daurna say,' she said at last in a low voice; 'I might be tempted to say mair nor the truth, an' there's Ane abune that reads a' oor hearts.'

'That's right,' cried Jean triumphantly.

'Ay; but there's ae thing I will say,' continued

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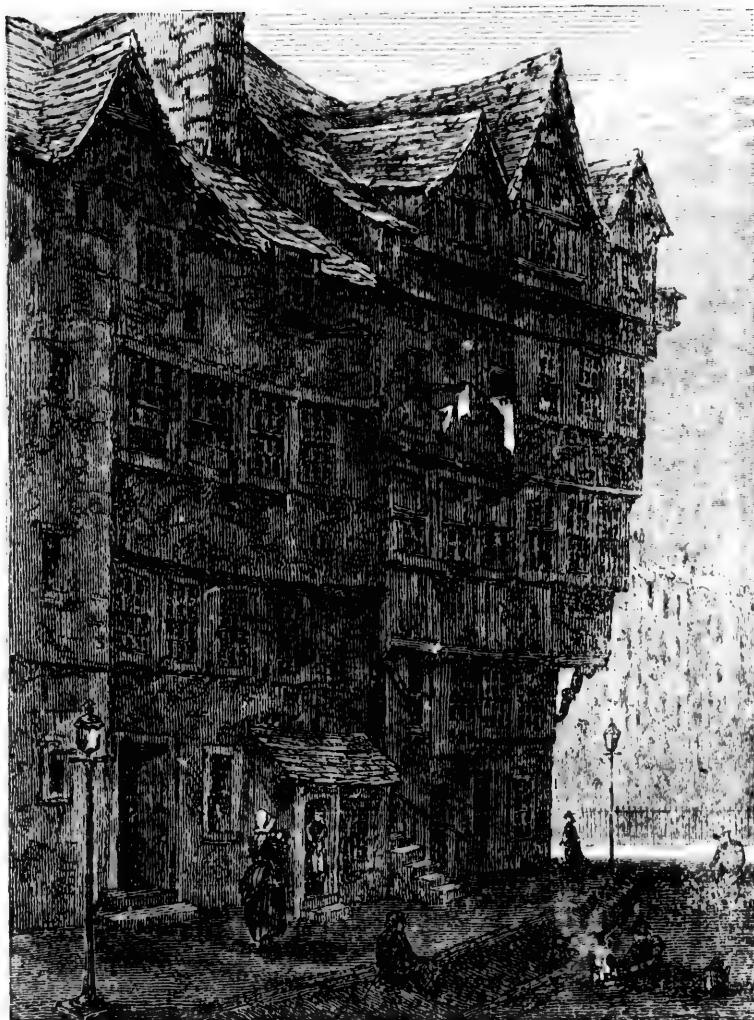
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the other solemnly, 'and it is this: God deal with me and mine as I sall deal with the puir bairn committed to my charge!—my husband's bairn, an' hers who lies low in the dust this day at the fute o' Lairgo Law!'

Jean only nodded her assent or approval, or whatever else she might mean.

'Is your man steady?' she asked, suddenly changing the subject of conversation.

'Steady? Ou ay. He's aye been steady yet, thank God! What for do ye ask? Are they a' quate-livin' folk in the stair?'

The last question was asked with a very quavering voice, for indeed Mrs. Bruce had good cause for doubting if any of them would come under that denomination.

'Humph!' said her eccentric neighbour, 'as to that ye'll learn for yourself. Jean is no tale-pyet, be she what she may!'

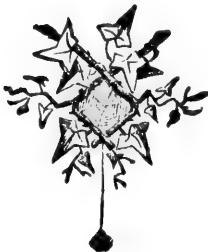
'I just speired at ye because my Willie's awfu' easy led,' said Mrs. Bruce apologetically. 'But he's been steady as yet—real steady. I hae nae cause for bein' anxious about him the noo.'

'If he's easy led,' said Jean with emphasis, 'mind my words, for I'll say no more than this, *keep him from Tam Lowrie and his wife!*'

'Tam Lowrie! That's on the first floor, I'm thinkin'?' began Mrs. Bruce. But Jean neither heard

nor heeded her words. She had seized little Effie by the hand again, and declaring it was time to be home, began their return march, keeping well in front of the other, so as to give no further chance of conversation.

And so they went down into the valley again—down the steep Castle-hill between the two Assembly Halls, and under the overhanging wooden front of the old house (now taken down) at the head of what was ‘The Bow,’ once. There Jean conducted them by steps down to the present Bow, yclept ‘The West,’ where they saw the celebrated shop of Mr. Braid, the baker, Jock Halliday’s master; and then past the Cowgatehead, blocked up with Irish barrow-women and old-clothes shops, and so onward till they reached at last the grimy stairs where both their dwellings lay.



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CHAPTER III.

MRS. HALLIDAY'S LETTER.



COWGATEHEAD.

'HEY, Betsey! Hae
ye seen oor Jock
gaun by?'

'Na, mither; no
this while back.'

This was part of
a colloquy carried
on by Mrs. Halliday
and her eldest
daughter, a half-
clad nymph of
thirteen, who was
skipping on the
plainstones below,
while her mother
leant over the bal-
cony above. The
balcony consisted

of an iron bar which helped to maintain the clothes-

pole, on which Mrs. Halliday's washings were dried, and from which a solitary shirt was suspended. To an imaginative mind this shirt might have suggested an idea of the absent master of the house in a similar state of suspension—at least, that was its effect on Mrs. Halliday as it swung and fluttered in the breeze.

'Sirs, me! I got sic a fleg wi' Sandy's sark e'en noo!' she exclaimed as she withdrew her head from the window. 'I thocht it was himsel'—or his ghaist, mair likely!'

Why Sandy's 'ghaist' was likely to be of grey checked woollen aspect, and destitute of head and legs, it is difficult to understand; but this was Mrs. Halliday's view of the subject.

Her house was, as usual, in process of being 'redd up,' and the door stood wide open—that was also as usual. She held something tightly in her hand, which might have been a letter; but it was so rolled up, crumpled, and blackened, that it was not very easy to distinguish what it was.

'Hech, sirs,' continued the good woman, addressing either an imaginary audience or the entire neighbourhood beyond the open door. 'Hech, sirs, it's a bonnie-like thing to think that here's a letter frae my gudeman, an' me lost my specs an' canna read a word o't. If that idle loon Jock wad only come hame! He comes aften aneuch whan nae-

body's wantin' him. Betsey's nae scholard—she'd jist mak a rigmarole o't; an' it'll be ill aneuch to understand' without that, nae doot.'

Agnes Bruce happened to come past the door at that very moment with the baby in her arms, and little Effie trotting after her. Hearing Mrs. Halliday's wailing remarks, she stepped in to ask if she could be of any use. Mrs. Halliday seemed somewhat embarrassed, and turned the letter round and round again as if wondering what to do.

'Thank ye kindly, neibor. I mak nae doot ye could read it for me; but to tell the truth, my man's geyan throughither, an' 'deed there's jist nae sayin' what might be in't.'

Agnes apologized for seeming too officious, and withdrew.

'If I see your laddie on the road, I'll send him up,' she said pleasantly.

'Ay, dae that, like a woman,' said Mrs. Halliday, following her to the stair-head, where, lounging over the railing, she carried on her discourse.

'Ye see, oor Jock's a gran' scholar, though ye wadna think it tae luik at him, maybe. He got his lear' at the Vennel schule up by, an', believe me, there's no a better maister than Maister Mill in a' the toon. He lethers them at times; but, my word he lethers learnin' into them; and what's their skins made for, I wad like to ken, if it's no for letherin' ?'

Mrs. Bruce did not attempt to discuss this profound view of physical science, and Mrs. Halliday resumed.

'Ma bairns are gey dour and wild, ye ken, an' I've to gie them their licks mysel' whiles ; but Jock aye says it hauds them fine an' warm an' saves the fuelin'. For he's an awfu' laddie for his joke, ye ken —oor Jock ! Hoot ay, and what for no ? It keeps the house cheery !'

'Mither !' skirled a voice from the entry below, 'there's oor Jock gaun up by wi' his board to Bristo Port !'

'Weel, rin aifter 'im, lassie, an' tell him there's a letter frae yer faither, an' he maun come hame to mak it oot as sune as Maister Braid can spare him.'

It was not very long before the redoubtable scholar appeared on the scene, coming up the long stair three steps at a time, and wakening the echoes with melodious howls, as was his wont.

'Noo, Jock, my man, dinna be a fule !' said his mother. 'I'll steek the door, an' ye'll sit doon an' read it through wise-like. *She* was awfu' kind offerin' to dae't, ye ken,' she added in a whisper, nodding in the direction of the Bruces' door ; 'but I'm jalousin' yer faither maun hae been on the rammle again that he hesna written this while back, an' it wadna hae dune to expose him to strangers.'

'Aweel, mither,' said Jock, 'we'll sune see.'

The door having been 'steekit'—a circumstance sufficient in itself to proclaim to the 'stair folk' that something important was going on—Mrs. Halliday set herself down on the end of the fender, threw a duster over her head, crossed her arms, and prepared in this solemn manner to receive the greetings or commands of her absent lord and master.

'Sit richt fornt me, Jock, an' dinna rin a' the words thegither as ye whiles dae.'

Thus admonished, Jock took the chair opposite to her, and broke the seal; for Mr. Halliday indulged in red sealing-wax, very stragglingly applied, and stamped with a 'thoomb,' not the crest of the family, but the genuine living article.

'Ma dear wife an' bairns,' began Jock, reading slowly from the document, which he held slanting towards the light.

'Puir Sandy!' ejaculated the mother, 'he's aye rael affectionate—maist o' a' when he's no at hame!'

This was said with perfect simplicity, be it observed—not the least vestige of sarcasm!

'This comes a-hopin' as you are well,' continued the letter, 'as it leves me verra bad; no atower the bed for a week.'

'Preserve us a', Jock! what'll be wrang?'

'It was the Newcastle races that guv me cowld.'

'Eh, Jock, it'll be the broon kadies! Yer faither aye taks them aifter ony o' his sprees—the Fast-day

or the like o' that. They're a sair trouble thae broon kadies. Puir fellow, I'm just rael wae about him, dae ye ken ?'

Bronchitis, it must be explained, was the disease indicated by Mrs. Halliday, who was apparently under the impression that it was something of the plural number and a sad colour.

A half-audible 'grumph' was the only expression of sympathy Jock accorded to his mother's various comments. He went stolidly on with the letter as follows :—

' Thae English doctors is jist a pack o' haverals—they hev nae skeel like oor men. The bit chappie that they sent for tae me aye says to drink watter, a thing that never agreed with me.'

Mrs. Halliday sighed deeply. Jock growled under his breath : ' A wus he wad gie the watter a better chance ! '

' Wife, I wus ye wad send my thick worset grauvet and anither sark—onything else ye mind o'. Me and some o' the ither men hev got word o' a gran' job aboot London; an' sae if I get up my heid again, I'm no hame just yet.'

' Preserve me! he's aye gaun farrer an' farrer awa'! I doot he'll no sattle verra weel aifter't. But 'deed! gin he doesna tak heid to his ways, thae broon kadies 'll soon sattle him ! '

' Dear wife an' bairns, I canna send ony siller

for a week or twa owin' to this sickness.' ('He might hae put in the races intae the bargain!' quoth Jock indignantly.) 'Sae ye maun dae the best ye can an' lippen to Providence, forbye makin' Jock stick to his wark an' bring hame his wages regular.'

'Huh ! I daursay that!' growled the youth referred to.

'Keep a guid heart, an' I'll try to send some siller afore lang. Dinna fash to pay the parcel to the railway folk.—Your true friend and well-wisher,

‘SANDY HALLIDAY.’

‘Noo, mither, I maun be aff, or the maister ’ll be flytin’. Gin ye’ll hae faither’s things pittin thegither, I’ll tak them tae the train the nicht.’

‘Eh ! Jock lad !’ said his mother, jumping to her feet, ‘I maun hae his worset grauvet socht oot ! Yonder’s his sark washed and dried, puir man ! an’ me thinkin’ it was like his ghaist. I wus he mayna be waur nor we think ! But whaur did I see that grauvet ?’

So saying, she seized the old hairless besom that was her favourite resource at all times, and began raking underneath the bed with it—a process which quickly revealed a strange miscellany of goods ; in fact, it appeared as if the wardrobe of the entire family was deposited in that safe and sure retreat.

‘He’s a fine man, tae, yer faither, Jock,’ she went

on meanwhile. ‘Ye mauna think that ill o’ him, for a’ his failin’s! But eh! Jock, my man! aye keep ye the richt road, for ye see what the ither ane brings folk tae!’

‘Ou ay, mither!’ responded Jock indifferently, and without more ado he was off, rattling down the stair as noisily as he had ascended it.

In due time Mrs. Halliday had raked out the ‘worset grauvet’ from some dark recess, and had rolled it up with a few other garments in the checked shirt still damp from the pole. Then she set to work and baked some oatmeal cakes, and cut down large whangs of a skim-milk cheese or ‘kebbox,’—all of which were packed a little confusedly in an old hamper, the viands being, in Mrs. Halliday’s opinion, ‘fine for the *broon kadies*.’



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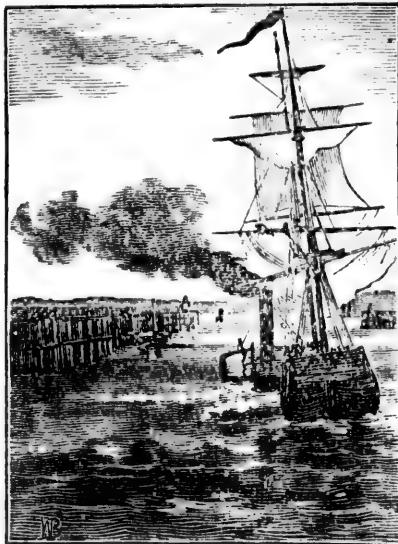
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CHAPTER IV.

EFFIE'S 'PENNY PIG.'



LEITH PIER.

SOME weeks had passed away since Agnes Bruce's first expedition to the Castle-yard. These weeks had helped to make her feel much more at home in the great city than she had ever hoped to do at first. The early summer weather had been bright and pleasant, and William

Bruce, like a kind husband and father, had often taken his little family out in the lengthening evenings, after work hours, for a stroll round the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links, or Queen's Park;

sometimes down to the old Palace of Holyrood, and on Saturdays as far as Portobello Sands or Leith Pier, to get a breath of the salt sea-air, and to look across towards the beloved but invisible Largo.

Effie, though she could not see with her own eyes the beautiful places and interesting objects around her, was marvellously quick at picking up some idea of them from what the others told her; and her keen ear for music was often gratified by street organs, German bands, and other itinerant performances. Once or twice, when the evening walk had been rather longer than usual, Effie had been greatly delighted by finding her own short legs suddenly relieved of the necessity of dragging wearily on, as she was lifted bodily in the strong arms of 'Oor Jock,' who would invariably declare that he 'had a bit errant that gait,' and 'wad gie the wee lassie a lift sae far's he was gaun.'

'That gait' must have been a very wide word in Jock's vocabulary; for once when he had joined them beyond the Dean Bridge, a huge parcel projecting from his pocket disclosed the fact that his original destination was the South Back of Canongate! It was only evening errands, however, for Lucky Law and others, that were thus dealt with, and Jock was of course master of his own leisure hours.

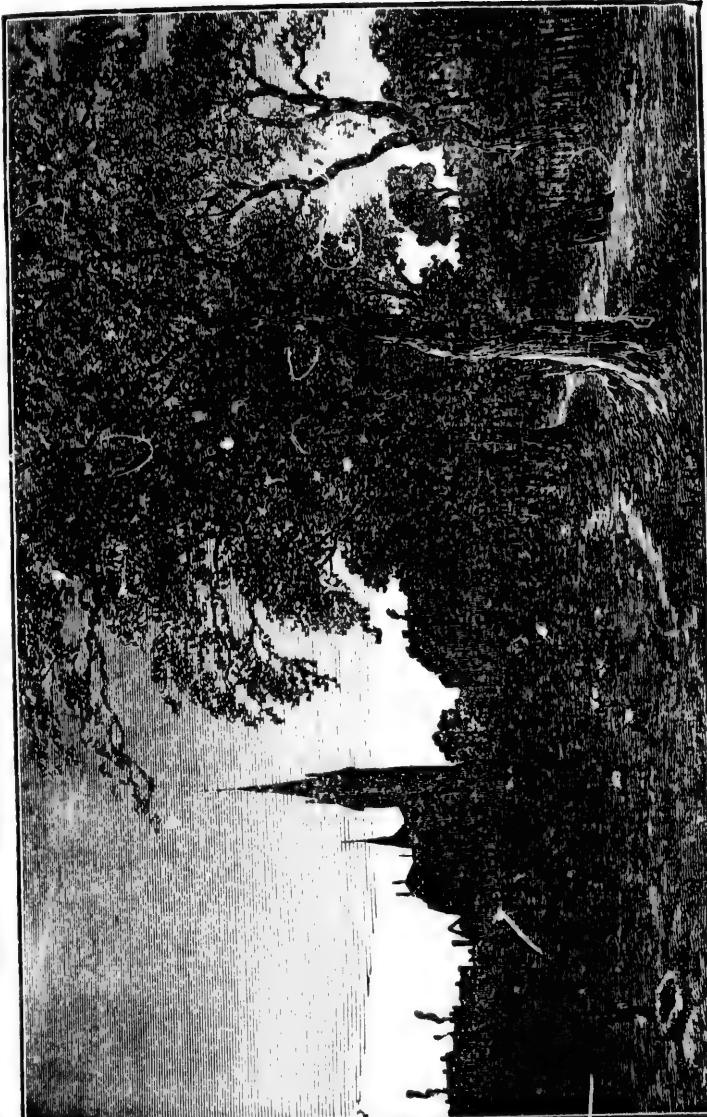
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Mrs. Bruce would say when they met him ; but Jock never owned to any such weakness.

'Hooh ! I'm no heedin', was his usual rejoinder, with an indifferent glance cast around him as if to show how little he valued natural or artificial beauty. He knew, however, the names of all the places they might pass, and the histories of many of them, and was quite ready to part with these bits of information ; only they were invariably thrown out as a bone might be thrown to a dog, so as to impress the hearer's mind with a conviction of their absolute worthlessness in Jock's estimation. For example, it would be Fettes College seen from afar that the Bruces were gaping at, and Jock would act showman thus :

'Ay, that's Fettes. Sir Willum Fettes, a rich banker, left money for't. A fine place, nae doot, but awfu' *English*. Mickle Scotch gowks are sent thete to be clippit into wee English *gentlemen*. *Gentlemen* ! I wus ye saw some o' them wi' their ticht jaackets an' chimney-can hats on their heids —laddies no hauf the size o' me ! Losh ! they're awfu' fond o' ca'in' hus "keds ;" but when I luik at them, I'm aye gled to be "a ked !" Hooh ! we've gi'en them mony a fleg, I can tell you. Ou ay !'

The Bruce baby, too, had grown and flourished wonderfully in the interval, and was considered—by his parents—to be the most intelligent and observ-

ing infant ever known to exist. Certainly town life had agreed with him ; so that his fond mother was all the more ready to allow that Edinburgh, in spite of noisy streets and crowded thoroughfares, had many advantages of its own, and that ‘ perhaps they did richt to leave the auld bit aifter a’, though it *was* beside bonnie Lairgo Bay.’

‘ Hoots ay, woman ; what are ye aye yammerin’ aboot hit for ?’ her husband would answer in a good-humoured, bantering tone. ‘ A man micht as weel be a kail-runt as bide in a place like yon a’ his days. Naething like a big toon for shairpenin’ up the wuts—that’s what I say.’

For Willie Bruce, whom any one would have seen to be a country man from his rosy cheeks and wondering eyes, considered himself a pretty sharp fellow now, and well up to the ways of the world.

‘ Eh, Willie, my man, I wus there mayna’ be waur things nor kail-runts in this mickle toon.’

Agnes Bruce looked anxiously at her husband as she said this. They had just passed, in one of their country rambles, a little group which had awakened in her a strong but painful interest. The mere wreck of what had once been a respectable artisan staggered stupidly along the road, ragged, dirty, and degraded. He was closely followed by a weary, anxious-looking woman, toiling under a heavy

burden, and leading a little starving child by the hand. Oh! in this great city, with its unknown sins and sorrows, would the time ever come when her Willie would be like that, when she would follow him so with little Effie, trying to lure him back from ruin?

'No, no! he could never be like *that!*' He had not given her much cause for anxiety yet, perhaps; but he was, as she had said, 'easy led,' and it was still a question here who was to lead him. It had been no difficult task in the quiet Fifeshire village, where all their friends were sober, God-fearing people, where his place in the 'kirk' was seldom or never vacant, and where every influence around them, from the cottage garden to the parish library, was one for good. Very easy there—but here! Their home up that dark, filthy stair, that seethed with life of a very low and degraded kind; their neighbours (Jock always excepted, and a little lame dressmaker next door), people they could hardly make friends of; for even Jean Campbell, itinerant vendor of pin-cushions and such small wares, had too little care for outward appearances. Jean was, however, rather better than they supposed her to be, being originally come of respectable people in a remote Highland parish, and having about her more information and scholarship than all the rest of the stair put together.

Jean was decidedly eccentric. Her temper, soured perhaps by early disappointment and misfortune, was cynical and morbid to a degree, though there were times when she softened wonderfully and betrayed glimpses of a good and kindly nature beneath hard looks and biting words. Little Effie had an extraordinary influence over her. She was never hard or severe with the child, but would pass her horny hand gently over the sunny hair and the sightless eyes, saying, 'The bonnie bairn! It's maybe just as well—just as well! Who knows what their een have to see or ever they close in their long, last sleep?'

The last time Jean had returned from her travels, she had stopped at the Bruces' door, and called little Effie to her, then rolled something round and hard towards her along the wooden floor. Effie quickly caught it, following it by the sound, and taking it up, gleefully asked if it was for her, and what it was for.

'Ay, ay; it's for you, Effie. It's a *penny pig*, my dawtie! Tell your father to make speed and fill it for ye, and take ye over to that Lairgo Bay ye are aye talking about.'

Effie was delighted. It was her first experience of this primitive sort of money-chest. She felt it all over and grew familiar with the rounded form —so smooth above, so rough below—the little knob

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at the top to hold it by, the long slit to pass the pennies through. She pressed the smooth brown surface to her lips, and called the precious gift 'her own—her *dear* penny pig!'

Jean seemed highly pleased at her gift being so much appreciated. Then she turned away sharply, saying, 'Never a plack has Jean to put in it, though! Just like her luck! All goes to the rich folk—none to the poor!' So saying, she dived into her cheerless-looking room and banged the door after her, as she often did in her misanthropic moods.

That very forenoon, when Jock Halliday appeared on the landing for his 'denner' or 'bite,' Effie got hold of her chosen ally and friend, and displayed her new treasure to him, with eyes that sparkled with pleasure, even though they could not see. Betsey, the half-clad nymph of the skipping-rope, met her brother at the stair-head, holding out a dish with two or three cold potatoes boiled in their 'jackets' (the best of all ways, by the bye), also 'twa bawbees,' which she amused herself by tossing into the air and catching again.

'Hae, Jock,' said the girl, 'mither's got wark at the rubber factory for hauf the day, an' she couldna mak ready the meat; sae ye're jist to tak thae tatties an' buy a drink o' mulk to yersel'.'

Jock stared at the potatoes, then tossed them

into one pocket, and the 'bawbees' into another of his ragged coat.

'What hae ye for yersels?' he asked with more real courtesy than might have been supposed from his tone.

'We've a' gotten the same as you, Jock; but *I'm* no gaun to buy mulk—nae fears o' me!'

'What'll ye buy?'

'*Gundy!*' shrieked Betsey as she ran wildly down the stairs before her brother could object.

'Ye mickle gowk!' he called after her contemptuously; but she was already out of hearing on this wild pursuit of pleasure.

'Ay, that's a bonnie die-die, Effie,' he said kindly, handling the beloved 'pig' that Effie held up to him; 'but it'll mak a fine jinglin' sound whan it's full o' bawbees, and ye'll like that best o' ony! Ask yer mither for some.'

'She's awa to the doctor's wi' wee Willie to be vack—vack—something—I dinna mind what She'll be a while yet.'

The child looked disappointed, for the pleasure of hearing any 'jinglin'' sound was to her an extraordinary one.

Jock did not like to see her bright eyes cloud over so. He ran off all the quicker, perhaps, to avoid the sight. But at the stair-foot he turned, muttering to himself, 'They say soor dook's best

for the stamack. I'd daur mine to fin' faut wi' onything I'd chuse to pit in't; an' 'deed I'm no verra sure whaur it is except whiles when it's toom! But I dinna mind humourin' it ance in a way. Soor dook's easy to get. Lucky Law'll gie me some for cleavin' her sticks yestreen, for we've been rael guude freens this while back.'

By the time Jock's soliloquy was ended he was at the top of the stair again. He looked in at the Bruces' door.

Little Effie sat silent but happy on a low stool by the fireside, hugging her new-found treasure. She knew his foot in a moment.

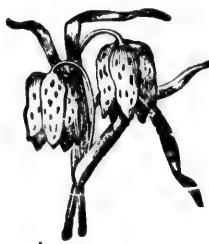
'Jock!' she said, 'what for are ye come back?'

But Jock did not answer in words. He only knelt down beside her on the rug, and slipped quietly into the 'pig's' mouth his two battered halfpennies, then gave the dish a hasty shake, whereat the halfpennies danced and danced again, making the most charming 'jingle' in little Effie's ears.

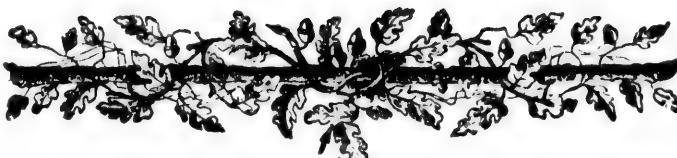
'Eh! Jock, that's braw! raw! Let Effie shake it hersel' noo!'

And so he left her blythe and cheery, to shake the pig and listen to its music, imagining all sorts of pleasant songs and stories to herself out of it, as was her wont.

Mary Morrison, the lame dressmaker, had come in with her work to watch Effie and the house. The sunshine came merrily in from the window on her and on the little blind face by the fire. So Effie was safe till mother would come home—safe and happy.

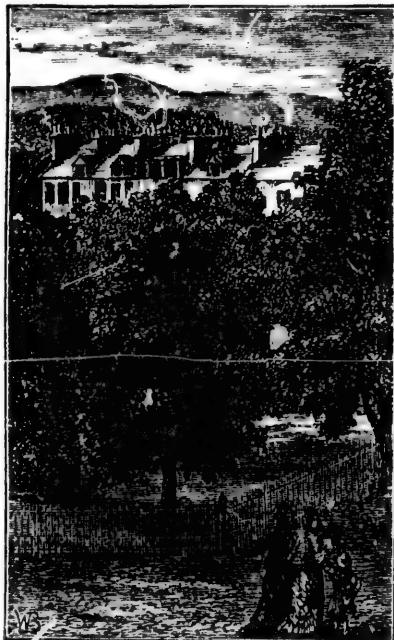


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CHAPTER V.

'THE GLENDINNINGS.'



GEORGE SQUARE.

IN a large and pleasant drawing-room on the south side of George Square, overlooking the gardens in the centre, then in full leaf and beauty, two young ladies were amusing themselves according to their different tastes. Alice Glendinning, the elder of the two, a fair, slender girl, was seated at the piano, playing soft,

dream-like symphonies from some of the grand old masters. Her sister Patricia, more generally called

'Pat,' just done with school life, stood by a window, watching the passers-by, and making comments upon them in a lively style, quite indifferent to the fact that no one was listening to her. She was short and thick-set, somewhat brown in complexion, and her face was only redeemed from plainness by a pair of merry black eyes, a winning smile, and frank, open expression.

'Well, I declare,' said Miss Pat in a louder tone, so as to arrest her sister's attention, 'there's that venerable "Mater" of ours at last, just coming round the corner! And on each side of her one of these chosen friends of hers, the Miss M'Gibbons—the fat one that I *don't* like, and the nice one with the curls. What a splendid "claver" the three are having! Well, I *never*! There comes Dr. Randal himself, no less, and his new assistant—oh, *isn't he* a cure! Why, it's the whole meeting turned out, I believe, in a procession; and our respected parent is sure to ask them all in for refreshments. Alice, I do wish you'd get her to remember that we're not living at Thornydean *just now*! Town people don't go in for bread and cheese at all hours as they do in the country—either luncheon at one, or afternoon tea at four.'

'Pat, dear, don't be staring out if they are all coming this way,' was Alice's only rejoinder.

'Staring, Alice? What a shocking idea! Only

"casting a casual glance," as we say in novels. And they are a good way off yet, besides.'

'That "we" reminds me of your novel, Pat. How is it getting on? I haven't been favoured lately with any of your "flashes of genius."

'Oh, that one is off the hooks, you know.'

'Published?' suggested Alice with a smile.

Pat shrugged her shoulders.

'Well, it's in the *press* certainly,—the press in our room, top shelf,—and likely to remain there. But really, Alice, I've got a splendid idea this time, which I think may come to something. I'll let you read the first chapter to-night. "Lorenzo the Lost," I call it. There are two elopements in it, and three sets of lovers, all at sixes and sevens, and'—

'Oh, Pat, do try to comb down your genius a little.'

'Comb it down, indeed! What an insulting suggestion! Down to the dead level of that tiresome, hum-drum, classical music of yours, I suppose. I hate the very name of it—ugh!'

'Pat, dear, think of the great musicians who comp'—

'Great fiddlesticks,' interrupted the literary genius. 'I don't believe one of them would have known "Annie Laurie" if he had heard it.'

'Very likely not, Pat. Some of them could hardly be expected to, you know.'

'Oh! Alice, here they all are at last, at our own corner. Here's a parting scene, for they're evidently not coming in after all Mater's persuasions. There go the Miss M'Gibbons in contrary directions—fat one into the Meadows for a saunter, thin one, I fear, back to the giddy world again. What a shaking of hands! "When shall we three meet again?" And Dr. Randal is being tugged across to Buccleuch Place by that indefatigable Mr. Towie. Oh! here is mother now. I'll go to meet her.'

So saying, the genius took herself off, a crimson ribbon from her hair being left to flutter on to the carpet in her rapid flight. Alice, too, rose from her piano, and wheeled her mother's chair into a pleasant, shady corner.

A minute afterwards Mrs. Glendinning herself entered—a bright, active matron not much over fifty, and thoroughly able to enjoy life—its work and its amusements—even after all the cares of a rather numerous family.

Mr. Glendinning was factor for some large estates in the south of Scotland, and the family home was in reality at Thornydean, a quiet rural nook of Selkirkshire. Just half a year ago they had secured this town house in George Square, that the youngsters might attend school, and the older boys and girls enjoy some of the many educational advantages that only a large city can afford. Mr. Glendinning

himself spent part of each week with them, and perhaps enjoyed the change as much as anybody ; while his wife, though she dearly loved her country home and all its concerns, felt that in Edinburgh a new life opened before her, which enlisted sympathies yet unstirred and energies hitherto dormant.

The old parish church to which they had, almost by chance, attached themselves, was one surrounded not only by its own beautiful and historic graveyard, but also by a low and poor neighbourhood, which presented a wide field for the missionary efforts of the congregation.

Dr. Randal, their minister, a man of apostolic zeal and rare administrative genius, had but lately entered on his work. Fresh from the green hills and breezy pasture lands of a quiet country parish, he almost shuddered as he faced alone the seething mass of misery, degradation, and crime now committed his charge. How was he to thread those filthy wynds and noxious stairs and closes, that were all the more loathsome because the clover-fields and the broomy knowes were so clear to his memory still, and the song of the laverock was yet ringing in his ear ?

And so the Doctor had wisely resolved to gather around him a band of devoted men and women who would help him to assail this stronghold of

Satan, and to gather from out its ruins the living jewels that lay there so foully crusted over with vice, so meanly clothed in wretchedness and shame.

It was this brave Christian enterprise that had so deeply stirred the warm, kindly soul of Mrs. Glendinning. She longed to reach a helping hand to those poor creatures, lounging at close-mouth or stair-foot, knowing nothing of a home life so happy and useful as her own had been. And she longed still more to see the little faces of the innocent 'bairns' grow bright and fresh as those of country children, and to hear their voices ringing in glad and childlike mirth, instead of with the strains of the drunken and the ribald.

'No, girls, no! indeed I am not the least tired!' she declared as she seated herself in the chair Alice had set for her, laughing at their eager solicitude about her.

'Do let me fetch you a cup of coffee, mother?' Alice had said, while Pat prepared to disrobe her of shawl and bonnet.

'I enjoyed the meeting so much. It was really quite refreshing. Dr. Randal speaks so clearly and so well about the way in which one must approach this work'—

'And *dear* Mr. Towie?' asked Pat in her mocking way. 'Didn't *he* get leave to make any sweet and interesting reflections?'

'Hush, Pat, my dear ; you know I don't like you to be too frivolous. But, do you know, Alice, I have done something about which I don't feel very sure of your approval. I had better confess at once, I suppose.'

'Oh, mother ! what *can* it be ?'

'You've asked Mr. Towle to dinner, Muffie, I know you have !' cried Pat, it being one of this young lady's peculiarities to invent as many new synonyms for the word 'mother' as her prolific imagination could suggest.

'Something you won't like so much, Pat,' said her mother, laughing. 'I have promised that my two elder girls will take a very small, tiny "district" between them—that one single stair may be set apart for them to visit, that is—I really could not help it, my dear. There was only this one stair left unappropriated, and Dr. Randal was so very anxious to have *all* his parish allotted. Now, what do you say, Alice ? for, of course, it falls most to your share. Pat is rather young yet for such a task. Indeed, I could not allow her to go alone.'

Pat sat staring at her mother open-mouthed and silent. Genius seemed for once to have deserted her. Alice had grown pale at first, but now a little wild-rose colour of pleasurable anticipation began to show itself.

'I should *so* like to be of use, mother dear ;

but—but—do you really think we can manage it? I am so bad at talking to perfect strangers—I know my courage will take wing on the very first floor.'

'Oh! as to that,' cried Pat, finding voice again, 'why, you know, *I've* pluck enough for *anything*! Yes, Alice, let's go to-morrow. I'll carry on the general conversation, and you'll drop moral reflections in gently afterwards, like the children's story books! It'll be first-rate. Mother, do tell us where is this El-Dorado to be found?'

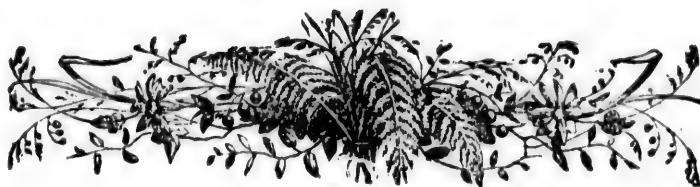
Mrs. Glendinning took a folded paper from her bag, and read: '*No. 97 Candlemaker Row!*'



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CHAPTER VI.

NUMBER NINETY-SEVEN ATTACKED.

SOME days elapsed before the Glendinning girls actually set forth on their new mission. Alice, naturally timid and self-distrustful, wanted time to think over it well, and to make what little preparation she could. Some pleasant books and papers, both well illustrated, some picture cards for children, and a bag of sweet-meats—these constituted what Pat called her ‘stock of ammunition for the grand attack.’

Pat herself had been most anxious to set off at once. Every morning heard her ask, ‘Aren’t you ready now, Alice? What on earth are we waiting for? Think of that stronghold of evil lifting its iniquitous head proudly to the sky, and us sheathing our swords here in luxurious idleness! I feel like another Greatheart before Giant Despair’s hospitable mansion! Come and let us begin!’

Still Alice waited.

'I must finish these little baby's boots first,' she said. 'I think some mother's heart may be a little more easily won if the pretty blue and pink things happen to fit her baby.'

'Bribery and corruption, Alice! I'll go in for nothing of that sort. High moral principle and elevated sentiments—these are the only allurements I mean to hold out!'

But a suggestion made by her brother Arthur gave Alice more confidence than Pat's rhodomontade, which she knew was very likely to end in smoke.

Arthur Glendinning, the second son, was a student about to enter the Divinity Hall. He was kept a prisoner at home just then by a severe sprain, and was consequently more in the way of hearing his sisters' plans and projects than he might otherwise have been. Arthur was a nice, frank youth of eighteen or so, combining some of Pat's merry humour with Alice's quiet steadfastness.

'I'll tell you what, Alice,' he said, 'you might help me out of a fine dilemma. I promised Dr. Randal that I would start a week-evening class for boys—big rough fellows, you know, who haven't had time for much schooling. Not like a Sunday school, but just to give them a taste for natural history and all that sort of thing. And here I am—more like

NUMBER NINETY-SEVEN ATTACKED. 63

a chained bear than anything else! It's no easy matter, I assure you, to carry on the business of life with only one leg—and how am I ever to get hold of these rascals?’

‘But what can I do, Arthur?’

‘Do? Like a good creature, keep your eyes on any boys you may meet in your district, and send them up to me! Mother says I may do what I like with that large room down-stairs; so say that Professor Glendinning’s class will meet here on Saturday evenings at seven o’clock. Fees payable in advance. Five guineas only for the course.’

‘Oh, Arthur! that will suit me exactly! It gives me something definite to say on my first visit —some little excuse for going. Thank you ever so much!’

So that very morning, being Monday, the two girls at last set out, resolved to begin the attack. They left the wide, pleasant Square, with its shady walks and leafy gardens, and passed through the narrow, noisy street where Bristo Port had once opened and shut its iron gates to the traveller, then passed along by the fragment of the old city wall still remaining at that time, and soon reached the gates of the Greyfriars’ Churchyard, where they paused to reconnoitre. They looked down a rather steep and dusty lane leading into the Grassmarket and Cowgate, called Candlemaker Row, a place which had

quite deserved its name in bygone days; for there all the candles of the city were duly made, in vast vats, emitting through the open, iron-barred windows an odour so powerful that in some memories forty years have not sufficed to efface it. The street was indeed one long row of candlemakers' cauldrons,



GREYFRIARS' CHURCH.

and loud and bitter was the outcry made when oil and lamp came in to spoil the trade and enliven the town. Oil and lamp had of course but a brief day, or rather night of triumph, before giving place to the ubiquitous gas. And now is not even that mighty spirit about to be deposed? However that may be, the old candlemakers of the Row have long since

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departed, and their place is occupied by flaring spirit shops, rag stores, blacksmiths' dens, small eating-houses, and blocks of dwellings so very far from being clean or comfortable, that one might well wonder whether it would not be better to have the old reeking cauldrons of boiling fat back again in their place.

'This is the place now,' said Alice in a rather despondent tone.

'Oh! this, is it?' echoed Pat still more dubiously.

During the walk Pat's spirits had been rapidly cooling, and her scintillations of genius had been few indeed. The vast supply of 'pluck' and 'general conversation' lately boasted of by her were now somewhat conspicuously absent. A crisis was at hand. After a few yards of this *via dolorosa* had been slowly accomplished, Pat fairly turned, saying :

'Do you know, Alice, I think it would be best for you just to strike up a little acquaintance with these people, and then I'll go with you another day!'

'What! running away already, Pat?'

'No, no! not that; but I fancy you are better at that sort of thing than I am—and—I want so much to go over to the Philosophical for that volume of Browning—what do you say, Alice? Would you think it unkind of me?'

'Unkind? Oh no, Pat, not at all. Mamma *said* you were rather young yet, you know, and I almost

think it may be as easy or easier to open a conversation by one's self. Do just as you like, dear, about it !'

' You're an old darling, Alice ! Such a weight off my mind ! I'll write six chapters of *Lorenzo the Lost* to-night,—I know I shall,—my spirits are so revived.'

' Off you go, then,' said Alice, laughing ; ' but don't expect me to read the whole six to-night, after my solitary labours.'

' I'll go now, Alice, though I feel horribly selfish, I must say ; but remember ! I mean to make myself of the greatest use on some future occasion.'

So the two parted, Pat to seek the life and light of Princes Street, *via* George IV. Bridge, and Alice to descend alone into the grimy vale.

It was about eleven o'clock, and a bright, airy morning. Mrs. Lowrie, in her usual easy toilette, was lounging over the railing of her own landing, apparently on the outlook for any bit of gossip that might turn up.

' This'll be some o' yer leddy veesitors, nae doot,' she said to herself in a contemptuous tone as Alice Glendinning's figure appeared at the stair-foot, for the girl peered timidly and dubiously about her in the darkening shadows of the entry. ' Hech ! hech ! things are come to a bonny pass when siclike cattle daur to dairken ma door ! But I'll tak the

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meesure o' that ane's fute easy—a feckless-like tawpie.

'Ye'll be seekin' for some o' hus fowk in the stair, Miss, I'm thinkin',' she said aloud as soon as Alice arrived within hail.

'I'm seeking for everybody,' said Alice with a pleasant smile. 'I should like to make some friends on this stair, and perhaps you will let me begin with you. May I ask your name first? My own is Glendinning, and I have come at your minister's request. He wants his people to become acquainted with each other, you know.'

'Ou ay. Weel, I hae nae objection, for my pairt. Lowrie's ma name an' ma gudeman's. But come awa in here an' rest ye a wee minute. We're plain workin' fowk, ye ken, but we're no ashamed o' that.'

'I should think not, indeed, Mrs. Lowrie!' said Alice in her winning manner as she followed her guide into a dark passage, and then emerged into the clearer light of what was partly kitchen, partly shoemaker's workshop.

The celebrated Tam was not then visible, but numerous tokens of his handicraft were scattered broadcast over the dirty wooden floor,—bits of leather, balls of rosin, mugs of paste, awls, tackets, what not? It was difficult to find a spare corner for the visitor; but Mrs. Lowrie scuttled about with wonderful activity, shovelling some dirty dishes off

one chair, and an empty porridge pan off another, and eventually got two seats ready; then ensconcing herself in one, she motioned Alice to the other. In front of them was the fire, or rather the grate; for it was merely an indistinguishable mass of grey ashes, rapidly accumulating to a pyramid on the hearth below. At the farther end of the room a door opened into a darker apartment blocked up with a large tent bed. Mrs. Lowrie did not allow the conversation to flag.

'Deed, as you say, Miss, we needna be ashamed; for what are yer grand folk aifter a' but dust an' ashes like oorsels! An' for a' their saft carpets an' cushions, losh keep me! they canna dae wantin' the puir shoemakers.'

'Of course not! But you know many of the grand people, as you call them, work just as hard as the shoemakers!'

'Aweel, I canna say! Me an' ma gudeman has striven hard, early an' late, an' aye keepit up a respectable appearance, and brocht up a big family —to be a comfort an' a credit to hus'—

Mrs. Lowrie was interrupted by a violent fit of coughing. Perhaps her last statement had been rather strong for even herself to swallow; for the police books could certain'y have thrown a more lurid light on the Lowrie family history!

'That is very nice,' said Alice innocently. 'You

will be able to take things a little more easily, now that your family are up and doing so well.'

'Nae doot! nae doot! But it's aye a hard push for us puir folk to mak ends meet; an' if ye hear ony word o' the coals or the cheap meal bein' distreebuted in the back end o' the year, ye'll no forget us, Miss.'

'Oh! Mr. Towie will see to *that*, you know'—

'Towie! That's a lang-shankit lad, wi' starin' een, that rins about the Row whiles? Ou ay! He cam' in ae day an' had a crack wi' Tam aboot polyteeks. Tam thocht him raither wake i' the heid. He's a great polyteecian, ye see, ma man, an' he's awfu' taen up the noo aboot that new law they're wantin' to mak in Paurliment. Preserve me! what's this they ca't?'

Alice could not enlighten her. She was far from being a good 'polyteecian' like Tam!

'Aweel! it's to dae wi' scrapin' mair siller oot o' us puir folk for the behoof o' some bit princie or ither, that must needs set up a hoose o' his ain. As ma Tam says, what for can he no tak a herrin' an' pitata like ither folk, instead o' drawin' the swat o' a haill nation to mak turtle-sowp for *hees* denner? But your folk 'll be a' Tories, maist likely?'

By what ingenious process the sweat of the nation was to be changed into turtle-soup, Mrs. Lowrie did

not explain, and her visitor sat silent a moment, deeply regretting the unprofitable turn the conversation had taken. Her heart sank within her. Would she ever do any good at all in the stair, if this was a sample of the intercourse she was to hold with its inmates?

'My father is a Liberal,' she said at last; 'but do you know, Mrs. Lowrie, I am old-fashioned enough to believe that a woman's politics should be *home* politics! That we should try to keep *that* little kingdom bright and pure and happy, and that if we do this, we may safely leave the larger kingdoms to other heads and other hands. But I must be going on now to make some more calls. I have a nice magazine here. Would you care to look it over? If you like the stories in it, you can have the others afterwards. Perhaps your husband is fond of a book?'

'Ou ay! I hae nae objection. Thank ye kindly, Miss,' said Mrs. Lowrie in a very indifferent tone. She was not to be outdone in respect of the high moralities, however, by this young mushroom of a creature. 'An' 'deed ye're no far wrang aboot the woman's wark, Miss. It's just what I aften say mysel'. Says I to Tam whiles, "Tam, my man, says I, "redd ye up the Lords an' the Commons, an' I'll redd up my ain fireside!"'

With this sublime sentiment, Mrs. Lowrie prepared to usher her visitor to the door.

NUMBER NINETY-SEVEN ATTACKED. 71

As Alice Glendinning glanced at the 'ain fireside' thus referred to, she could not help thinking how few traces it showed of this noble determination; but she tried to think and hope the best of her new friend. A loud yawn, or rather protracted howl, startled her at that moment. It came from the tent bed in the 'ben room.' Mrs. Lowrie also started.

'The gudeman was late at a meetin' last nicht,' she explained, 'an' was a wee thing forsochen. He's no that strong, ye ken—sair fashed at times wi' a bile on the stamack.'

Miss Glendinning expressed her sympathy, but retreated all the more quickly on finding that the great politician himself had been so near at hand all the time of her visit.

'Ye'll find them a geyan rough lot up the stairs, Miss, for a young leddy like you,' Mrs. Lowrie said in a loud whisper when they reached the landing.

'Some of them are very poor, I suppose?'

'Puir! No them! if they wadna waste their money on drink and playactin' an' the like. But 'deed, an' I needna speak, for I ken little aboot ma neebors. I just aye keep mysel' to mysel', an' never listen to their clavers. Thae folk in there they say's *awfu' wild.*' (This was said with the corner of her apron up to her mouth.) 'Some folk say the

faither an' mither never were richt mairret, but I
canna say for my pairt.'

'Good-bye, Mrs. Lowrie,' said Alice Glendinning
as quickly as she could, anxious to get away from
what she felt she *ought not* to listen to.

Mrs. Lowrie looked after her as she disappeared,
and muttered to herself, 'She's mair spunk than I
thocht, that ane!'





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CHAPTER VII.

THE 'LEDDY-VEESITOR'S' PROGRESS.

ALICE GLENDINNING went on her way, trying hard to banish from her mind the unpleasant surmises which Mrs. Lowrie's discourse had awakened there. Fortunately one or two doors were locked, the inmates being out at work probably—among these the door of that very couple over whose hymeneal rites Mrs. Lowrie had thrown so dark a cloud. And so, shortly after twelve o'clock—long before she could otherwise have accomplished it—the visitor found herself on the garret floor, with only four rooms to be explored. Jean Campbell's was one, and she was absent on her travels. Mary Morrison, the lame dressmaker, was sitting beside Mrs. Bruce, as she so often did, for company; so one visit did for both.

Agnes Bruce and Mary Morrison sat by the window, busy at work. Baby slumbered in his cradle.

Effie played about the floor, with her beloved 'pig' beside her. It was a pretty and peaceful scene—quite a little green oasis, Alice Glendinning thought—after the dreary and dirty desert through which she had penetrated. Everything in the small room was scrupulously clean and tidy—the fireside swept, the tiles bright and shining, table and chairs scrubbed white as the cotton 'seam' in Agnes Bruce's lap. She welcomed her young visitor with simple kindness and warmth, and it took only a very few minutes to make these three strangers feel as if they had been long and well acquainted. Effie put her hand shyly on the 'lady's' silken sleeve, and was soon telling her all about 'bonnie Lairgo Bay,' and how 'faither' had promised to take her there some day. 'Jock Halliday,' being another of Effie's favourite topics, was not forgotten, and her mother had to explain that it was a 'big laddie' next door who was very kind to the little blind girl. Alice inquired after this youth with much interest, for she had not as yet beat up any recruits for her brother's class, and she resolved to make one desperate effort to secure Oor Jock.'

'What a nice view you have of our dear old churchyard!' she said, looking out from the little square window, with its screen of sweet-scented geranium and fuchsia, which overlooked the quiet

resting-place renowned in Scottish history as the scene of the signing of the Covenant. There one desolate alley, with mouldering gateway and rusty chains, still tells of cruel imprisonment suffered once, long, long ago, by many who bade faltering farewell through that very grating to the friends they loved the best, and were then led forth from it only to die. Around its walls are to be seen the crumbling and moss-grown monuments of many of the wealthiest and noblest families in Scotland. And there are to be found in close proximity the stately mausoleum of the bloodthirsty persecutor, and the lowly graves of a thousand saintly martyrs.

It was a scene on which Alice Glendinning's eyes loved well to rest, and she had a pleasant little chat with her new friends about the storms and persecutions of other days, all now happily at an end.

'It is a bonnie an' a peacefu' spot, that auld kirk-yard,' said Agnes Bruce meditatively. 'Aftentimes it minds me o' the quiet country place we cam' frae. No that it's ae bit like it, to be sure ; but there's maybe jist a wee thing o' the same calm sough aboot it, whan the wund waukens amang the trees, or the sound o' psalm-singin' comes frae yon grey wa's. It aye minds me then o' the paraphrase little Effie says real weel, about

"Whaur the wicked cease frae troublin,
An' the weary are at rest."

There was a sad and rather anxious look on her face as she said this, and her eyes glanced restlessly round the little room, as if there was some lurking shadow there to trouble her. Alice Glendinning wondered what it could be that made her look so, when all the outward circumstances of her lot seemed to suggest only joy and peace. But it was too soon to inquire, even in an indirect way. She would trust to time making her more of a friend and confidant in any little troubles, or even in greater ones, than she could hope to be just yet. So bidding them all a kind and cheerful good-day, she set off for her final call, which was reserved for Mrs. Halliday—not, however, without noticing Effie's dear 'Penny Pig,' and slipping into it a little bit of silver, the pleasant jingle of which Effie detected in a moment, crying out :

' Eh, mither ! bonnie, bonnie sound ! like the silver shells amang the rocks in Lairgo Bay.'

' Mrs. Halliday,' said Alice, stepping in at the door, which as usual stood gaping, ' I must come some other day, if you will let me, to make acquaintance ; but I promised to be home by one o'clock to-day, and must run for it ; only I have looked in for a moment to ask about your boy. He is not in just now, I suppose ?'

' Oor Jock ?' said Mrs. Halliday, laying down her work, for she had taken in some coarse sacks to make

THE 'LEDDY-VEESITOR'S' PROGRESS. 77

since the supplies from Sandy had fallen off so badly,—‘Oor Jock? ’Deed, he’ll no be lang, Miss, o’ comin’ up for his bite, puir man. It’s no that muckle, but he’s no like to forget it. Ye’re kindly walcome, ma young leddy. Wad ye no sit a meenit or he come in?’

‘Thank you. I only wanted to ask if he would join a little class my brother is starting.’

‘A claiss? Ou ay. But, ye see, oor Jock’s a gran’ scholard, Miss, an’ I daursay he thinks himsel’ kin’ o’ feenished like. But he nicht tak it a compliment, I’m sure, to be socht by the like o’ you, Miss, an’— But there he comes, I’m certain sure, rantin’ up the stair like a steam-engine. Ye may ken oor Jock’s fit, Miss, amang a thoosand. Noo, dinna ye think the waur o’ him if he’s a kin’ o’ dour an’ stour at the first wi’ ye, for it’s jist oor Jock’s wye, ye ken, an’’—

This whispered advice was cut short by our hero’s arrival on the landing-place, where his mother immediately tackled him, saying with an admonitory shake of the head :

‘Noo, Jock, this braw young leddy’s come up to speir if ye’ll gang to a claiss at yer bye-hoors; an’ ye ken, it’s no ilka ane that wad trouble herself sae faur.’

‘No, no, Mrs. Halliday; let me explain it to Jock myself,’ said Alice, laughing, for she saw Jock’s face growing longer and longer under his mother’s well-

meant address. ‘‘It is hardly a *class* I mean, Jock. My brother is quite a young fellow, not *very* much older than yourself, and he is so fond of natural history and all that, and has so many curiosities collected—quite a little museum of his own, you know ; and he wants two or three big boys like you to come to him once a week, to keep up the knowledge they have gained at school. I hear you are a good scholar already, Jock’—

Jock favoured his mother with an expressive ‘glumph’ here, as if understanding where that character had come from. It was the only sign he had made hitherto of any feeling whatever on the subject. He had just stood hanging against the doorway with his usual indifferent air, his hands in the pockets of his ragged coat, and his floury ‘bannet’ on his head. The latter breach of etiquette was at last remembered by his mother, who promptly pulled off the ‘bannet’ with a brief—

‘Div ye no mind yer mainners, Jock?’

‘Do you think you would like to join them, Jock?’ asked Alice with her pleasant musical voice.

‘I’m no heedin’ !’—Jock’s usual formula—was the only answer.

‘Noo, Jock, my man,’ began his mother ; but Alice interposed.

‘Are you fond of beasts and birds, Jock ? We have

THE 'LEDDY-VEESITOR'S' PROGRESS. 79

some fine Persian rabbits to show you. Such long hair they have, and such bright eyes. And we have a wonderful monkey who does all sorts of tricks, and teases poor Sancho, our old terrier, quite out of his life. I think you must come and see all our pets. Won't you think of it ?'

Jock's eyes had begun to sparkle when the Persian rabbits were so skilfully introduced, and the monkey almost conquered him.

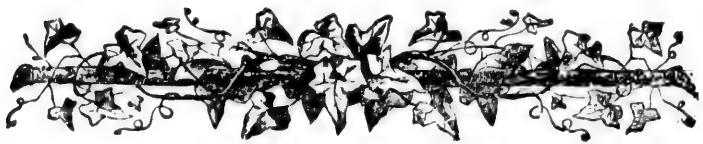
'Maybe I wull,' he said ; 'whaur is't at ?'

'At our house, Jock, in George Square, on Saturday, at seven in the evening. We shall be so glad to see you. You won't forget? Now, I'm only keeping you from your dinner, I know. See, here is my card with the right address.'

So saying, she ran merrily off down the long stairs that she had ascended with such dark forebodings. Things looked so much better, she thought, now that she had really seen them, and here was one pupil at least fairly captured.

Jock did not forget his engagement all that week, though his invariable answer to his mother's numerous reminders was, 'Hoots! I'm no heedin' !'





CHAPTER VIII.

MR. TOWIE'S 'BAND OF HOPE.'

HAT summer so bright and beautiful faded, as such summers always will fade, only too soon from the grey towers and breezy slopes of Auld Reekie. It was followed, however, by an autumn almost as mild and beneficent as itself; and then at last came the serried forces of bluff old King Winter—biting frost, chill hail showers, and deep-lying snow--more terrible by contrast with the past mildness, and bringing want and suffering in their train, especially to those poorer districts with which our story has so much to do.

Mr. Halliday had not yet returned to the bosom of his family, and his remittances had been but few in number and trifling in value. On the wife and eldest son, therefore, had as usual devolved the task of providing for his family of some five or six hungry children. Mrs. Halliday was employed all day now

at the Fountainbridge Rubber Factory, and was, perhaps, quite as happy as usual; but her house and bairns, committed to the care of Betsey—the young lady of skipping propensities—could not be said to improve, either the former in salubrity and cleanliness, or the latter in morals, manners, and deportment.

Fortunately for 'Oor Jock,' he had another influence working on him for good. He had actually summoned up courage to go that Saturday evening, as invited, to Miss Glendinning's house, and had found the 'claiss' there to be of a much more attractive character than he had supposed possible.

Arthur Glendinning had received him and the other lads—three or four about his own age and station—in a comfortable room looking out into a pleasant garden where most of the numerous 'pets' were kept. And there was plenty of hot coffee and buttered scones for the boys before they began their work at all; so that they went to their books and writing - copies with some vigour and comfort. Then after 'lessons,' which were as much an interesting conversation about the wonders of Nature and Art as anything else, they had a saunter in the garden, and were introduced personally to the Persian rabbits and all their associates.

No wonder, perhaps, that Jock found his way back there nearly every Saturday evening after-

wards, and no wonder either that other working lads were found glad to enjoy this breath of wholesome relaxation and improvement. Arthur Glendinning was quite delighted when he saw so many as a dozen eager and intelligent faces round his class-room table, and he had good cause to believe that they came not so much for the hot coffee and the scones as for things better and more enduring by far.

The Glendinning girls often looked in upon them, either out-of-doors or in-doors, and made the acquaintance of each one—a circumstance which helped greatly to soften and refine the ideas and manners of most of the boys, not the least conspicuously those of ‘Oor Jock.’ He had learned unconsciously to be more particular about his own personal appearance—to dust the old shabby shooting-jacket free from its superfluous coating of flour, and to tie the faded tartan necktie so as not to reveal the ragged ends.

Dr. Fandal and Mr. Towie were both frequent visitors at Mr. Glendinning’s, and with both of these, particularly the latter, Jock, as well as the other lads, soon became acquainted. Mr. Towie was, as Mrs. Lowrie had graphically described him, ‘lang-shankit, wi’ starin’ een;’ for his eyes at least seemed always on fire with some new idea or project, while his short, stiff, brown hair was always bristling up,

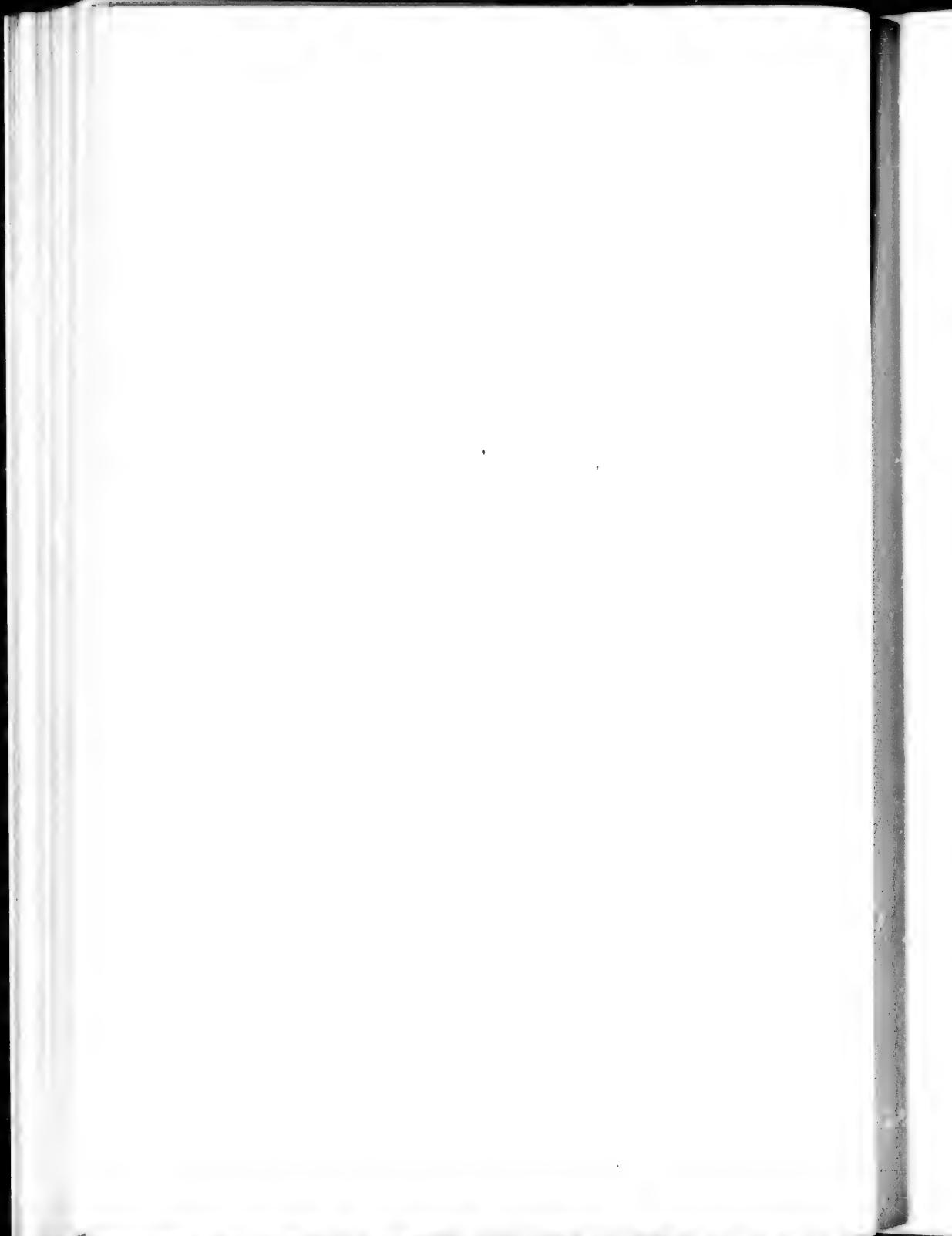
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MR. TOWIE'S 'BAND OF HOPE.'



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as if in sympathy therewith, and his long, lithe form was continually to be seen rushing about on some parochial enterprise. Many a time was he to be seen at Cowgatehead or King's Stables, up Lamont's Pend or Castle Wynd, in the centre of a knot perhaps of ragged urchins, perhaps of wizened crones, whom he was eagerly persuading to reform in some way or other—to join a Sunday class or a 'Band of Hope,' or to attend a meeting of some sort. It may be that Mr. Towie enjoyed the social charms of the lively old-fashioned drawing-room up-stairs, with Alice Glendinning's soft, dreamy music, and Pat's lively, rattling conversation, and felt that it was a great relief to drop in there now and then, after the dark closes and the filthy wynds he had so much of all day long, or even after the lonely dreariness of his own lodgings up three stairs in Keir Street; yet he certainly did not even there neglect the work committed to his charge.

'Jock,' he said one evening as he was in the garden among Arthur Glendinning's boys—'Jock Halliday, I want you to make up your mind thoroughly about the temperance cause. I want you to put down your name just now as one of our new "Band of Hope." Will you do it?'

Jock's usual rejoinder was of course at hand: 'Hooh! I'm no heedin'.'

'Well, but Jock, you know, it's a thing you ought

to consider carefully. Look at your mother's difficulties, poor woman, for instance, all through your father's unfortunate propensity to drink.'

'Ay, weel, but I dinna ken what guid it wad dae me to pit ma name doon. I drink naething stronger nor pump-water frae June to Januar', and frae Januar' back to June again. What mair can I dae to keep aff't?'

'That's a good beginning, Jock—a grand beginning; but if you put down your name, it gives a sort of confirmation to the thing. It strengthens immensely your good resolution; and—and then your influence over others, you know, Jock—that is a most important thing.'

'Influence?' said Jock, gaping with astonishment.

'Yes, my man, influence. I mean that whatever one fellow does, a good many others are likely to do. Let your influence be for good, Jock, not for evil.'

'I dinna ken,' answered Jock slowly, 'wha wad be likely to dae onything because Jock Halliday had dune't—unless it was onything daft-like, maybe,' he added with a laugh.

'Well, you know, Jock, there's that fellow up your own stair—William Bruce. You've more say with that family than I have by a long way. I doubt very much Willie is going to give us the slip

altogether, and that his poor wife and children will soon be in a most miserable condition. Now, couldn't you try to stop that fine fellow from ruining himself? Think over it, Jock.'

Jock shook his head.

'It's thae polyteeks,' he said at last, rubbing his sandy hair. 'It's a bad job when they tak to them. Tam Lowrie an' his set hae gotten a haud o' Willie, an' he gangs up to their club noo at nicht an' spouts awa. He thinks himsel' a gran' haun' at it, they say. I dinna ken aboot that; but I ken, whan Tam Lowrie an' him comes hame, whiles they're no that sure whether their heids or their heels are upmost.'

'Well, Jock, suppose you join the temperance band to-night, and tell Willie you've done it? There's Miss Glendinning, though, calling us. Will ye go with me to the meeting to-night, and do it?'

But in spite of all Mr. Towie's eagerness,—his eyes being nearly out of his head, and his hair quite perpendicular,—Jock only shook his head once more, and uttered his usual indifferent response, 'I'm nae heedin'!'



CHAPTER IX.

SANDY'S HAME-COMIN'.

IT was about two months after this conversation had occurred, when the early snow was lying deep in the streets, and the bitter winds were sweeping round every corner, that Mrs. Halliday received another letter from her absent spouse. It was very short. In fact, it only stated he would be home on the following morning, he and his mates being about to start from London by the night train, their job being over, and Mr. Halliday's own health being far from good. It was eight o'clock when the letter arrived. Jock had come home for his breakfast, and read it aloud, after which he computed that his respected parent would be due in a couple of hours. It rather startled the little family circle, this bit of news.

'Eh! Jock, an' to think o' me wi' the hoose no redd up nor naethin'! No that yer faither's awfu' perteeeklur naither; but he's been sae lang

awa, an' Lunnon's siccan a gran' place forbye
this !'

'It's as weel ye're no at the fact'ry the day,' said Jock. 'I'll rin doon an' see if Maister Braid can spare me ower to the station. He'll maybe need a lift wi' his cairrages.'

'Deed ay, Jock, my man, that's weel thocht on,' said his mother cordially as she threw some sticks on the slumbering fire, and seized her 'fail-me-never,'—the old hairless besom,—proceeding at once to rake the premises with it wildly as heretofore, in search of 'matter out of place' (as dirt has been defined by a modern philosopher!). Some vague notion was evidently in her head that Sandy had been accustomed of late to many luxuries and refinements in the great metropolis—streets paved with gold probably being one of them—after which the aspect of Modern Athens would seem decidedly dull and prosaic!

Some hours later, when Mrs. Halliday's fire had burned up a little, and her kettle had been got to boil in preparation for her husband's breakfast, she plunged her head out at the window, and, leaning on the iron beam before mentioned, began her anxious look-out. On a chair by the fire were a cracked cup and saucer, a spoutless teapot, and one or two articles of the family service. The viands consisted of (to use her own words) 'a muckle loaf,

a dad o' butter, an' a whang o' cheese.' It might not be much, but it was waiting there with a kindly welcome for one who had scarcely reason to expect much welcome of any sort. Many and many a time the blankets had all been in pawn, the cupboard had been bare, and the 'bairns sair hungered,' all because Sandy Halliday could not want his glass—not only one glass, certainly, but a good many. But Mrs. Halliday was good nature itself, and never a harder word escaped her than, 'I'm jist rael vext aboot Sandy, dae ye ken!'

'Eh, sirs me!' she exclaimed after a short scrutiny of the passers-by, 'there's Jock noo, comin' roon frae the Brig; an' if that's no the gudeman hissel', leanin' real heavy-like upon him. Preserve me! What'll be wrang? Is't thae broon kadies again? I maun rin doon an' help Jock wi' him.'

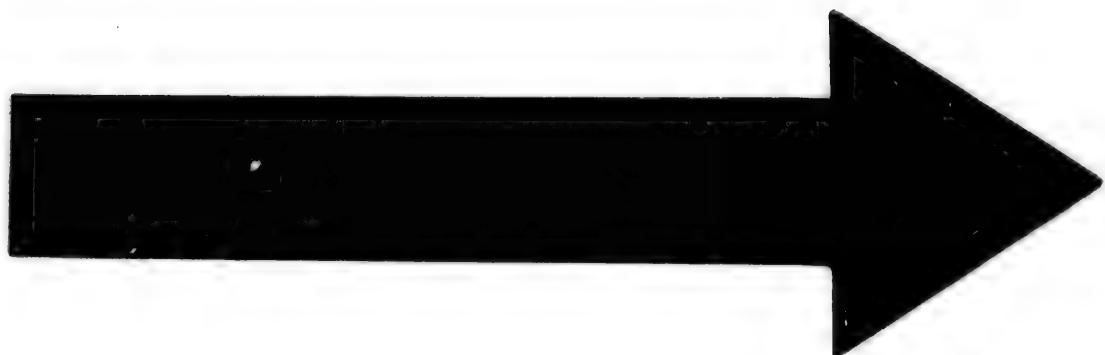
So saying, she lost no time in hastening down to the street; but before she reached it, she met Betsey and the other children, who had been sent out of the way for a little time till 'faither got sattled.' Betsey, however, had been on the alert while occupied with her skipping-rope, and came flying back now with the latest intelligence.

'Eh! mither, faither's awfu' fou! Jock canna get him hauden straught up for a' he can dae.'

'Gae awa wi' yer havers, lassie, an' dinna hinder me the noo,' cried the poor mother in an agitated

voice as she pushed the girl away and ran up the Row as quickly as she could. Sandy's eccentricities she was well used to, and it was not a trifle that would strike her so deeply. A staggering gait or confused utterance might have been vexing enough, to be sure, just at his homecoming ; but Mrs. Halliday's practised eye saw that something else was wrong too. She was quite right. Sandy Halliday had come home—*a dying man!*

Jock had found no easy task waiting him at the Waverley Station ; for Mr. Halliday and his mates, who were kindred souls, had spent all the first part of their homeward journey in discussing the contents of several black bottles, and the latter part of it in endeavouring to sleep off the effects of the same. The other men, strong and hale, had accomplished this desirable end so far as to be able to stagger homewards unaided ; but Halliday, a worn-out man at the best, and now labouring under an incipient attack of his mortal enemy the 'broon kadies,' could only reel helplessly about on the platform till he was grasped and steadied by the stronger arm of his son. Jock took the same view of the case as his sister Betsey had done, and he was only angry—not alarmed in any way. Uttering a few growling reproaches, he gathered up the few 'cairrages' his father



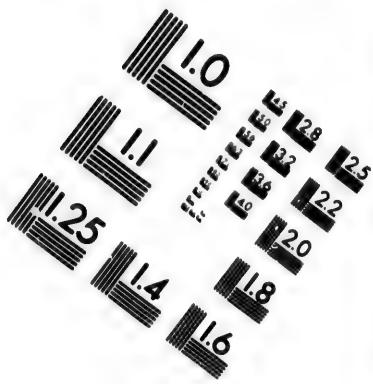
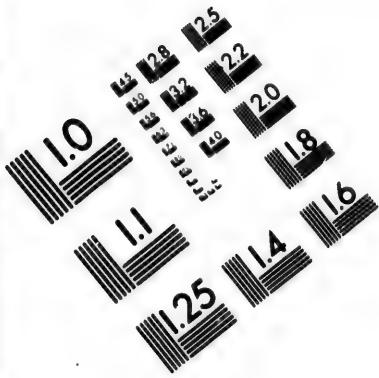
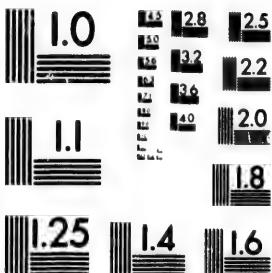
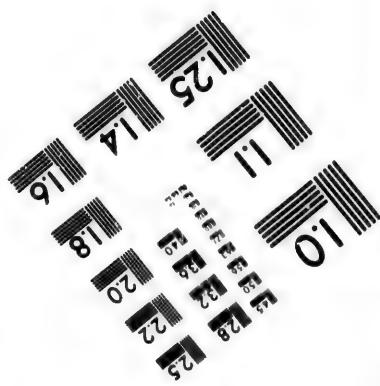


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had brought with him, and gripping him again by the elbow, he made the best of his way out of the crowded station, and then up the long incline leading to Bank Street, and so on till they had crossed George IV. Bridge and reached the Candlemaker Row. It was a long and arduous pilgrimage, for Halliday senior, lurching heavily from side to side at every step, drove his son now into the gutter and now against the wall, complaining all the time in a feeble tone that the 'hooses gaed roon' an' roon' like a whurley-gig.'

Long as the way was, however, Jock would not shorten it, as he might have done by going down the Bow; for Braid's shop being there, he was determined not to risk this new disgrace. Never a word had he uttered during the walk; he was too angry and ashamed for that. It was only when his mother came running towards them that he perceived how much worse things were than he had supposed. For his mother's face was white with fear, her eyes were startled-looking, and she had hardly a word for either of them. She held up her finger as if to warn her son. And then Jock looked, too, in the face of his miserable sire. It was a strange, ghastly, and blue-looking countenance, from which all intelligence and animation seemed to have vanished; and it was one on which some dark, dread shadow seemed lowering

fast. Even the boy's inexperienced eye saw now that something else was wrong, and his heart smote him for having been so angry.

The neighbours gathered quickly round, and they were all kind and sympathetic, whatever view of the subject they took.

'Puir fallow; he's sair forsochen!' said one woman. 'Thae trains is eneuch to kill onybody! Come awa, my man, an' I'll gie ye a han' up this lang stair o' oors!'

They clapped Mrs. Halliday on the back, and tried to encourage her, too, in this new distress; and even Mrs. Lowrie, though she never meddled with her neighbours, according to her own account, caught hold of Jock as he followed the wavering procession slowly up the stair, and whispered in his ear:

'Jock, my man, if yer mither wants a bite to gie him, or even a wee drap o' the cratur to revive him like, jist ye come doon to me for't.'

With all this attention Sandy Halliday was soon laid safely, and as comfortably as circumstances would permit, on his own bare, curtainless bed. Every ordinary means of reviving him was first tried, but tried in vain, and then the doctor was sent for. It was growing late when he came, and the early darkness of a short winter day was setting in. He shook his head.

'A very bad case,' he said. 'Too far gone for any remedies. I don't know if he'll live over the night. Just wet his lips with a little brandy now and then.'

Jock went for Mr. Towie, too, and everything the sick man could want was readily obtained; but Halliday only lay unconscious, breathing very hard, with a strange rattling in his chest. He neither spoke nor moved.

Agnes Bruce had taken all the children 'ben' to her own fireside, where they were better cared for than usual. Jean Campbell and other neighbours came and sat with Mrs. Halliday in solemn conclave round the bed, only uttering wise saws and sayings occasionally, or expressions of condolence. The poor afflicted wife said little, but rocked herself to and fro, covering her face, except when she rose to look at 'her Sandy,' and to moisten his dry, parched lips.

And so the long dark night passed away, and the chill, eerie hour before the dawn had come. The neighbours had all gone for a time, except Jean Campbell, who, with Jock, sat grim and silent by the fire. Mrs. Halliday had grown restless, and in stirring about the little room had come upon her favourite besom, which, by the mere force of habit, she now clutched with her trembling hands. Just at that moment a gleam of intelligence lighted up the face of the dying man. By the quivering light of

their one candle she perceived it, and stooped gently over him.

'Gudewife,' he said feebly.

'Ay, Sandy, ma man, ma ain gudeman; ye're at yer ain hame noo, Sandy, ye ken.'

'Gudewife, ye're—ye're—aye—reddin' up the hoose,' he said, glancing at the besom.

'Ay, Sandy, ma man, 'deed am I, lad, an' never mak verra mickle o't, maybe, ye'll be thinkin'.'

'I'm thinkin',' said Sandy with an effort, 'there's maybe something for *me*—till—redd up—tae—but—it's—maybe—owre—late.'

His voice died away into a whisper as he said it, and the gleam of life and intelligence began to fade. Was it some echo from the long-gone past saying, in that silent hour, 'Set thine house in order, for thou shalt surely die'? Or was it only a passing fancy of the disordered brain? Who can tell?

However that may be, poor Sandy's hour had come, and from the miserable and disorderly house there went forth into the darkness a 'tenant-at-will'—not very orderly—not very ready to go--yet he went!—whither? oh, whither?



CHAPTER X.

'LIGHTS AND SHADOWS IN THE STAIR.'

SMIRS me! It's a rael camsteery kind o' warld this, aifter a'!

These were Mrs. Lowrie's words as she sat in front of her own ashy fireside next Saturday evening, the great 'Polyteecian' himself enjoying the calumet of peace and her society in his own ingle-neuk.

'What are ye gaun on aboot, wumman?' was Tam's rejoinder.

'It wad mak onyboddy *gang on*, as ye ca'd, to think o' a *waddin'* at the stair-fit an' a *kisten* at the stair-heid, baith trysted for the same hour tae! 'Deed, I dinna ken hoo to manage a glisk o' baith o' them; or whilk may be the best worth a body's time!'

'Katey Blake's waddin' 'll no be a great affair, I wad say.'

'Deed no. He's but a weedaw-man she's gettin',

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an' I hae nae opeenion o' *them*. I aye think the gloss is kin' o' aff o' them like.'

'Havers, wumman, havers!'

'Havers or no havers, Tam, I hae a richt to ma opeenion; an' I'll e'en say that gin *ye* had been a weedaw-man yersel' lang syne, I wadna hae gane the length o' ma fit to the minister's wi' ye! There's for ye, ma man!'

Tam smoked on in silence, keeping his eyes fixed on the smouldering embers in the grate. Whether he saw there any dream-like picture of what his life must have been, bereft of the sweet society of Mrs. Lowrie, or whether it was a vision of that lady herself, as when in maiden loveliness she first captivated his youthful fancy, must remain uncertain. Probably his feelings were too deep for utterance.

His wife bestirred herself presently, and after a few easy toilet arrangements, joined the 'neebors' on the stair, who were eagerly watching for the bridal party. She stayed long enough to witness the departure of Katey Blake, led off in triumph by the successful widower to the minister's house in George Square, and then returned for a moment to her own household gods, in particular to a three-cornered cupboard, from which she extricated a small black bottle and a footless wine-glass.

'It's chappit aicht a while syne,' she remarked

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to her spouse. ‘They’ll hae puir Sandy screwed doun by this time—an’ ‘deed I’m no heedin’ if they hae, for thae gruesome kin’ o’ sichts gie me a turn at the hert whiles. But it’s what we maun a’ come to, an’ I’d like to see wha’s there. We’ll awa up. I’ll tak this drap o’ speerits wi’ me, for it sattles the nerves like naething else, an’ maybe that feckless tawpie ’ll hae nane i’ the hoose.’

Tam followed his wife obediently, and they soon reached Halliday’s garret, which looked barer than ever in its unwonted order and quiet. There was the coffin, proudly styled ‘a full-muntit kist,’ laid on two chairs, with the long gaunt form already gently enough lifted into it. There was the poor widow, surrounded by some friendly neighbours, and the half-frightened ‘bairns’ huddled into a corner in the background. The Lowries were in good enough time to offer condolence, the little ceremony being barely over; but Tam slunk back into the darkness of the landing, and allowed his wife to represent the family on this important occasion. There was perfect silence among all the men and women present, until at last the widow herself gave brief utterance to her feelings:

‘*Ma puir Sandy! Ma ain gudeman!*’

This was all; but the tone in which it was said

spoke volumes. No one could doubt that, whatever had been the faults and failings of the deceased, he was at that moment to her the fine manly fellow she had thought so much of in days gone by—the husband of her youth, the father of her children.

Then the company followed suit, each with some appropriate sentiment or moral reflection, generally pretty well-worn ones.

'Aweel ! it's a' ower wi' him, puir fallow !'

'Ay, sirs ! an' it's the road we maun a' gang !
Wha'll be the neist ? It's hard to say !'

'He luiks rael pleesant like, puir man !' said one woman. 'We've a' oor ain fauts, nae doot, but to ma way o' thinkin' Sandy wasna the warst in the stair !'

Mrs. Lowrie darted an irate glance at the last speaker, as if *jalousin'* who might be supposed to merit that unenviable distinction which poor Sandy Halliday had failed to attain ; but it was neither the time nor the place for open hostilities.

'We're a' frail human craturs,' she said aloud, in the didactic style she was so fond of assuming as head of the 'stair-folk,'—'frail human craturs ; an' what mair hae kings an' princes, an' grit anes o' the yerth, till say for themsels ? An' as to oor fauts an' failins, them 'at thinks themsels the whitest are maybe jist as black as ither fowk,

an' a hantle blacker. But I'm verra gled to see a' thing here sae wiselike an' respectably conduckit ; it's a rael genteel-like kist, an' does credit to the stair.'

Mrs. Lowrie had the last word. All seemed to feel that due respect had now been paid to the bereaved family, and one by one they retired, after a brief word of farewell and a kindly shake of the hand, to the poor desolate creature, who tried to say :

'Thank ye kindly, neebors, for the grace that ye hae dune this nicht to him that canna thank ye.'

Most of the departing guests—among others Mrs. Lowrie—were in time to hail the return of the bridal pair, and to join in pelting with old 'shoon' (they were *very* old!), and handfuls of salt, the fair young damsel who, according to the highest authority in the stair, had been rather too easily won, and who was no longer simple Katey Blake, but Mrs. Michael Flannigan.

Nature had, however, been beforehand with them in the matter of pelting, for the whole party were plentifully sprinkled with white fleecy snowflakes—the first outcome of a wintry storm that had been brooding silently over the country for days.

And the next day—Sunday—while the white-

mantled hills kept guard round the city, and leaden skies hung low over the muffled streets, one little procession attracted the attention of the people in the Row, for it was one of their own number going the way whence he would not return.

A tall lad followed close to the humble hearse, leading two little boys with him. His mourning was scanty in the extreme—only a band of crape round the well-brushed ‘bonnet,’ slouched carelessly, as usual, over a face very white and hungered-looking. He never raised his eyes from the deep ruts made by those black wheels upon the snow-clad ground.

So, perhaps,—and even in plainer characters,—lay the example of the dead father they followed before the eyes of his children !

Had the little garret looked bare and dismal at the sad ceremony of Saturday night? It now looked far more so—what house of mourning does not?—when all was over, and the bereaved family had gathered once more in narrowed circle round the cheerless hearth. There was a fire, indeed, though rather a smoky one, for Jean Campbell had all that evening kept on stalking in at intervals with a bit of stick or some cinders, which she coaxed into a flame; and she had even pushed the old tin kettle into a snug

corner, where there was some chance of it boiling in process of time, though poor Mrs. Halliday repeatedly assured her that this latter step was useless, saying, 'There isna a pickle tea within the fowr wa's o' the hoose this nicht!'

But in spite of Jean Campbell's kindly attentions, things looked as dull and desolate as they could possibly do — one feeble tallow candle flickering in the socket being the only light they had. The widow rocked herself to and fro, with a low moaning sound, on a 'creepie' before the fire. The younger ones crouched silently and wonderingly near her; while Jock sat with his face buried in his hands, and his head resting on a wooden spar at the foot of the dismantled bed, the white sheet of which still bore the impress of his father's coffin-lid.

He was the first to rouse himself. He stepped forward to where his mother sat, and put his hand on her shoulder:

'Dinna ye greet, mither,' he said,—'dinna ye greet sae sair! Ye hae nae cause to blame yersel', for ye were aye gude and kind to *him*. It's me that might greet, for I was gey dour an' thrawn wi' him at times.'

There was a sob in the boy's voice as he said this, and yet in a moment he had rallied. A spirit of self-defence seemed to rise within his

breast, and, shaking back his rough shock of hair, he muttered between his teeth: "Deed it was gey hard at times to ken hoo to deal wi' him!"

"Eh! Jock, ma man!" cried the widow, bursting into tears, "dinna speak that gait o' yer ain faither, an' him new carried frae the door!"

Jock fell back rebuked and ashamed, and once more laid down his shaggy head to rest upon the bed-foot. He was wearied out from want of food, want of sleep, and unwonted excitement, and at that moment there were strange new thoughts throbbing and surging in that rough head of his, so hardly pillow'd.

"I've jist stappit up to speir for ye, puir body, said another voice at that moment. It was Mrs. Lowrie, who was certainly not without a kindness of her own. "Ye maun be verra dowff an' dowie this nicht. See, noo, I hae jist brocht up a drap spirits wi' me, an' ye'll pit this ower yer throat or we begin oor cracks—it'll dae ye a wairld o' guid."

Mrs. Halliday thanked her, and put the glass to her lips. Then remembering her son, she paused and said, "That puir laddie has mair need o't than me. He's had neither bite nor sup this day, puir fellow."

Mrs. Lowrie looked as if she thought this rather a waste of the precious liquor, but at a time like

this she could not refuse. 'Hae, Jock, ma man, tak a drap o' this ; ye're welcome,' she urged in her hospitable manner.

And Jock lifted his heavy head for a moment, and looked wistfully enough at the fiery spirit that sparkled gaily even in the dirty wine-glass and under the flickering light. It was like the 'red pottage' of old in the eyes of the fainting huntsman : life, vigour, warmth, comfort—all seemed to be in that tempting draught, while without it there was only death and desolation. Ah ! but the drunkard's life and the drunkard's death were lying blank and bare before him, forcing him to utter in his heart one agonizing cry that they might yet be saved from a fate so terrible--himself and those he loved in his own rough, boyish way so well.

Jock covered his face with his hands, while Mrs. Lowrie stood with the brimming glass beside him. Only for a minute, yet it seemed to him an hour ; for in that brief moment how many faces came and went, how many voices sounded in his ear ! His mother and the children beggars, and worse than beggars ; little Effie and her mother worn and wasted, shrinking from the deep abyss into which her foolish father's hand was daily dragging them down ; and far above that, like some bright angel form, was the pure, sweet presence of Alice

Glendinning, saying in her clear, soft tones, 'Be good, Jock—be good and brave. Tread the way *we* tread, live the life *we* live !'

That momentary struggle past, the boy jumped to his feet full of a new and eager resolve—so suddenly, indeed, that he knocked right up against poor Mrs. Lowrie and her proffered glass, spilling half its contents on the floor.

'Mother,' he said firmly, 'we've seen aneuch o't, you an' me ! We'll hae nae mair to do wi't. Come what may, I'm awa tae pit doun my name !'

Some brief words of thanks to their astonished visitor, and Jock was off.

'Preserve me, the laddie's in a creel ! To skail the guid Glenleevat as if it was but ditch water !' exclaimed Mrs. Lowrie, draining off the rest of her glass as if in an unconscious reverie. 'But 'deed young folk's as weel wantin't, in ma opinion ; sae you an' me'll jist hae a quate drappie by oorsels, hinnie, noo that he's awa !'

'Na, na, neebor ! Thank ye kindly ; thank ye kindly ! But it's owre true what oor Jock says, that *we* hae seen aneuch o't. Ma puir laddie maun be the breadwinner noo that his faither's awa, an I'll no gang against him naeway. It's no for me tae pit the stane o' stumblin' in his gait. Na, na ! But I'm awfu' muckle oblieged tae ye for a' that—'deed am I !'

Mrs. Lowrie's anger fairly boiled over at this second refusal. 'Awa wi' ye, ye hypocreectical jaud! You an' yer ne'er-dae-weel son 'll hae gey empty stamacks or ever *I* offer to feed ye again! If it wasna for the deed man new carrit frae yer door, I wad gie ye a bit mair o' ma mind, I'se warrant ye. But I'll say nae mair e'noo. I ken brawly what's what, though I'm maybe no sae thick wi' yer *leddy-veesitors* as ye think yersels to be.'

So saying, the irate lady flounced off, banging the door after her violently, and rushed down the stair almost as quickly as Jock had done.

Poor Mrs. Halliday, deeply affected at the result of her own words, which she had meant to be perfectly courteous, was destined to be still more startled by the extraordinary behaviour of her only remaining comforter, Jean Campbell. For Jean started to her feet as soon as the door was slammed, and began to clap her hands eagerly, though in a subdued manner, too, and then gave vent to one or two long shrill laughs or other unearthly sounds peculiar to her. It was evident that Jean greatly rejoiced, for some reason, in the turn events had taken.

'Wheesht, wheesht, ma wumman!' cried poor Mrs. Halliday in an awe-struck whisper; 'div ye no mind that this is a hoose o' murnin' an' a hoose

o' death? It's no a time for the lauchter o' suls
an' the clappin' o' hands. Oh no, an' my puir
Sandy's corp hardly owre the doorstep.'

Jean seemed stricken with remorse when she saw
the poor creature give way again to all the violence
of her grief.

'Ye'll not heed a poor, crazy creature like Jean,'
she said with a coaxing tone, patting her on the
shoulder as if she had been a child; 'but I was
glad, glad. Sorrow and death are here indeed;
hunger and want and poverty are here, yet I
say to ye, *Rejoice!* Rejoice; for when the devils
are gone back to their swineherd again, the angels
of God will draw near—ay, they must be very
near now.'

'Aweel, Jean,' said the widow, only half pacified
by this strange address, 'they maun be unco like
angels 'at wad think o' comin' to a place like this.'

'A queer kind of angel?' said Jean meditatively.
'Ay, maybe it will be that.'

And Jean Campbell was right.





CHAPTER XI.

BETTY'S SUPPER PARTY.

WE must now for a moment follow Mrs. Lowrie on her hasty flight down the long, dark stairs. Near her own door she bumped up against a woman with a large basket, who was ascending slowly and laboriously. So rapid had been Mrs. Lowrie's motion that this sudden collision was a pretty smart one, and on the stranger was immediately poured forth a torrent of that vituperative eloquence for which 'Tam Lowrie's wife' was so justly famed.

But the new-comer, a big, brawny country woman speaking with a strong Lowland accent, seemed by no means overwhelmed.

'Keep yer ain fish-guts for yer ain sea-maws, ma wumman!' she retorted. 'Aw dinna like that lang'age o' yours, aw can tell ye; an' maybe ye'd no like mine gin ye had a taste o't!'

'Ay, indeed!' began the other lady. 'A fine

pass this is that things hae come to, when a body canna ca' the stair their ain, even on a Sawbath nicht, but maun mak room for a set o' tinkler folk traikin' about wi' their *baskets*, like it was Hallow Fair!'

The stranger, however, deigned no reply this time, but marched steadily on, and disappeared, basket and all, into the darkness of the stair.

Jean Campbell had been right, for a messenger of help and comfort was near, as she had said; and yet it was but 'a queer kind of angel' too! No white-robed, aërial, winged form, but the substantial matter-of-fact 'Betty,' head cook, housekeeper, and factotum in the Glendinning family; for she it was who now presented herself at the door of the Hallidays' desolate garret, breathless and excited after her long climb and recent sharp encounter with some one below.

It was probably this state of perturbation that caused her to knock more violently at the widow's door than she would otherwise have done.

Mrs. Halliday herself opened it, saying in a querulous tone:

'Sirs me! Wha wad think this was a hoose o' murnin' wi' a' this Babel gaun on around it?'

'Dinna talk to me o' Babel, or Bawbylon aither,' said the visitor excitedly, glad to get her story out at last. 'The ill lang'age o' that beldame down

the stair bates a' that was ever heard in *their* streets, or aw'm chated! An' as to a hoose o' murnin', ye might as weel say a den o' daurkness at ance, for aw canna see wha's leevin' an' wha's deid here! Eh! Jean, ma wumman, is that you? An hae ye dune ma biddin'?"

'Ay, ay,' said Jean, chuckling to herself, and rubbing her hands as if in eager expectancy of something pleasant. 'Ay, ay; it's all ready—the fire's kindlin' up fine, an' the kettle 'll not be that long now. I thought you would be here before long. Jean said the angels were on the road—ay did she, though maybe you'd say it was but a foolish speech.'

Betty, who had little turn for figurative language such as Jean Campbell frequently indulged in, and probably did not recognise herself as the subject of this allegory, began to give some fresh instructions to Jean regarding the contents of her basket, which now revealed a noble supply of good things—ham, cold meat, broken pastry, and bread and butter, besides a coffee-pot, which only required the aid of the tin kettle to complete its attractions.

While Jean Campbell busied herself in arranging these viands in tempting order on the table, and distractedly blew the feeble flame flickering below the aforesaid dilatory kettle (a scene which the Halliday children watched as if it were a trans-

formation scene in the pantomime), Betty turned herself to the widow and began some of those expressions of condolence and sympathy which the circumstances demanded, and which, to say the truth, had been somewhat unceremoniously delayed. But Betty had a kindly, 'couthy' manner when she chose, and soon made it all right.

'Ay, puir body!' she said, clapping the widow affectionately on the shoulder, 'this is a sair blow that has come to ye, an' a dowie hert ye maun hae this nicht! An' they tall me he was a wiselike man to luik at. But ye had a' thing rael wiselike an' respectable, I hear, an' what mair could ye dae for him? Sae noo ye'll dry yer een, ma wumman, an' think o' thae bonnie bairns that's laft to be a comfort an' a blessin' to ye.'

'They're sair hungered, puir lambs,' said Mrs. Halliday, drying her eyes. 'I was jist gaun to see if there was a neevesfu' o' meal left to mak brose to them or oor Jock comes back. He was to gang for a laif frae Mrs. Braid. She wadna mind us seekin' for't though it's Sabbath, for she kens the circumstances.'

'Ye needna trouble Mrs. Braid this nicht, ma wumman! Ma mistress has jist sent me up here aince errant wi' some supper for you an' your weans; an' see, here it is a' ready for ye, an' the kattle's jist comin' through the bile. Sae come

awa an' mak the bairns sit roun' the fireside here.
 Whaur's Jock, ma freend, the only ane o' ye that
 I'm acquent wi'? That's his fute on the stair
 this verra meenit. Come awa, Jock, ma man, an'
 get your bit supper like the lave!'

Jock entered with a much happier countenance than he had shown at his departure. He seemed relieved, too, to find that his mother had got out of the hands of Mrs. Lowrie and into the safer ones of old Betty.

'But wha am I to thenk for a' this?' began the poor widow. Then interrupting herself, she exclaimed, 'Eh! I micht weel ken it's Miss Glendinnin' that has dune it a'. Jean *said* it was an angel, an' she's the likest to ane I ever saw or heard o'!'

'Miss Ailice?' said Betty. 'Ay, 'deed is she! It's her aw've aye heard crackin' aboot ye a', ye ken—this bein' her districk like; an' it's her that gars yer neebor there come oot oor way whiles for a mouthfu' o' meat (Jean had been despatched for some sticks), and to get her bausket filled anew wi' thae prin-cods an' rubbish she gangs aboot wi'. Puir auld Jean! She's been mair taen up, though, aboot you an' the weans than ever she is aboot hersel'! Aw'll say that for her, though she's a queer kin' o' wife tae. Aw dinna ken whiles what to mak o' her verra weel. But aw'm jist hinderin' ye wi' ma claivers!'

'Eh no, no, wumman! yer no hinderin' me!' exclaimed the grateful widow. 'It jist fair warms ma hert to hear ye speak! Will ye tell yer young leddy hoo she's made the weedaw an' orphan till rejoice this nicht—an' say'—

'*That wull aw no,*' said Mistress Betty stoutly, 'for 'deed it was ma ain *auld* mistress that thocht o' this! She's as guid as ony o' them, an' has a hauntle mair sense an' expairence to the bargain!'

Then the supper was begun in earnest.

It was a repast such as the young Hallidays had never even imagined in their wildest dreams, and, childlike, their sorrow was for the moment forgotten while with eager eyes and gaping mouths they prepared to do justice to it. In truth, they sorely needed some nourishment to revive them; for the slender income of the family had been so heavily taxed by funeral expenses that food was ill to get, and the poor little things, white-faced and weary, had got to the indifferent stage which succeeds the first sharp pangs of hunger. But that soon vanished at the sight of Mrs. Glendinning's supper.

A cup of coffee revived their mother, too, wonderfully—far more effectually than all the 'draps' out of Mrs. Lowrie's black bottle could have done, and she began to talk more composedly of her recent distress and other topics.

Jean Campbell was not idle meanwhile, even on her own account, though she chiefly busied herself in helping the little ones; and at odd moments now and then she stopped to rub her hands together and chuckle quietly to herself, probably remembering the incident of Mrs. Lowrie's rejected offer. And Betty, having nothing to do but look on, took that opportunity of discoursing fluently on her own particular affairs.

'Weel, ye see, aw'd hae been here a gey while since, but aw was hindered, for it's siccán a hoose for folk, oors. Ye ne'er saw the like. Folk till their breakfast, folk till their denner, folk till ilka meal o' meat; sae nae wonder it taks me a while to get through a' ma dishes, no to speak o' ma pats an' pans! The lasses are verra willin', but I aye like to luik after a' thing mysel'. An Sawbath nicht as this is, we've a heap o' young folk in on a veesit to the toun, an' they maun aye hae their meat, ye ken! But the mistress, she says to me this mornin', "Noo, Betty, I'll trust to yer bein' up to thae puir bairns wi' some supper afore they gang to their beds." "That wull aw, mem," says aw, "an' wi' a richt guid wull tae!" An' 'deed aw haena been as pleased wi' the toun since aw cam' as aw am this nicht, seein' ye a' made a wee mair cheery like. Eh, sirs, it's an awfu' place this mickle toun!'

The widow sighed a melancholy assent to any views her benefactress might have to offer on this or any other subject; but Jean Campbell had a mind of her own, and was more inclined for conversation besides.

'The town!' she repeated; 'what ails ye at the town? Think ye that the green grass and the wimpling waters can make folk happier and better than the *town* can do? I trow not.'

'Aweel, Jean, they tell me it's an awfu' place for sin an' wickedness, whatever ye may think to the contrar'.'

'*Sin and wickedness!*' repeated Jean scornfully. 'One must needs go out of this world altogether to get rid of *them*! I tell ye that Jean Campbell was born and bred among Highland hills and glens, where the foot of the false Southron never trod, and she *knows* that the purple heather and the bracken bush can hide secrets as dark and deeds as cruel as ever the cold plainstones or the crowded causeway could tell of.'

'Wheesht, wheesht, Jean, my wumman!' interrupted Betty, quite alarmed at Jean's violent words and strange gesticulations. 'Ye maunna gang on that gait an' fricht thae puir bairns—an' it the Sabbath nicht tae.'

The Halliday family were, however, in no danger of being frightened. They were far too well and

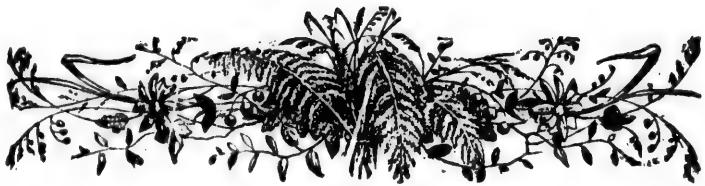
busily employed still over the fragments of their meal ; and, besides, Jean's rhapsodies were quite familiar to their ears, though they often conveyed but little meaning to their minds.

'A' that aw meant to say was this,' resumed Betty, who was now putting on her shawl and bonnet for departure, 'that aw was rael sweered to leave "Crummie" ma coo, an' "Sawny" an' "Mysie" ma mickle swine, an' a' thing sae bonnie an' caller aboot the doors. Sae Kirsty Deans, the byre wife—she's an auld crony o' mine—says to me, "Losh keep me, wumman, ye're never gaun to leave Thornydean for that muckle heap o' smoky lums an' sklate stanes as they tell me E'nbrog is?" "Ay, Kirsty," says aw, "the family are no gaun a fit wi'oot auld Betty. For what wad aw hear but that they were a' half-pushioned by some o' thae toon tawpies wi' their greezy pats an' pans? Or what wad aw see but them a' comin' hame as white's the gowans on the brae yonder, jist wi' pewlin' owre ill-cookit meat the stamack canna thole? Na! na! come what may, aw'm for the toun." Sae here aw am, an' rael canty have aw been. Hoot ay; an' what needs we heed the clavers o' aither peat bogs or plainstanes? Never ye think mair o' them, Jean, ma wumman. Ye'll be oot oor road the morn for yer awmous? There's aye a gude Providence owre us a' wherever oor

lot may be cast. Sae guid nicht, an' joy be wi'
ye a'!

Betty departed, laden with the grateful thanks of the whole party; and Jock went with her, as in duty bound, to see her safely home, and to carry the empty basket. As it was getting late now, and she was so much of a stranger in the city, Betty did not despise so stalwart an escort. And before long sweet sleep and peaceful rest had fallen softly over the Halliday garret.





CHAPTER XII.

A NEW EXCITEMENT.

JHAT long, hard winter, with its cheerless skies and pitiless storms, passed away at last by slow but sure degrees, giving way in its surly fashion to the boisterous mirth of March and the soft but changeful moods of April. The old lime-trees in George Square Gardens flushed out into leafy beauty again, brightened here and there by purple lilac or golden laburnum. And in the Meadows and on the Links again the silvery gowans shone and sparkled in the sunlight, while the air grew glad around them with the voices of children in their play.

The Glendinnings and their new Edinburgh friends had found a fresh source of interest and excitement in the prospect of a grand bazaar which was to take place in the Music Hall some time during the sittings of the General Assembly, when it was hoped the many ministers, with their wives and families, would

swell the number of buyers. The object of this bazaar was to raise funds for the mission work in the Grassmarket ; a reading-room, a library, a coffee-house, and other institutions being much wanted there.

Into this movement Mrs. Glendinning had thrown herself with all her warmth of heart and customary energy. She was to take charge of one of the largest stalls, besides acting as secretary for the committee along with their friend, Miss M'Gibbon. And so from that time forward No.—George Square became a scene of bewildering arrangements and preparations, often laughed at by Mr. Glendinning and the boys, yet ably seconded, too, both by them and the girls, as well as by numerous visitors, cousins, schoolfellows, and so forth.

What numberless luncheon parties—what scores of afternoon teas—had to be held for the due discussion of this all-important business ! Innumerable friends and relations had to be written to about ‘work’! They had to be coaxed to send ‘work ;’ threatened with utter estrangement if they failed to send ‘work ;’ bullied, tormented, entreated, *adjured* to send ‘work’! And the result was that by and by every corner in that large, many-roomed house of theirs began to bristle all over, bulge out, and finally boil over with the said ‘work.’ Bales of antimacassars, piles of cushions, footstools and sewed

chairs by the dozen, hampers of babies' boots, and trunk-loads of tea-cosies and pen-wipers—these were the abundant harvest of that busy seed-time!

But the seed-time itself was by no means an unpleasant period. It was full of new amusement and fresh interest for the young people especially. Alice Glendinning went on daily helping in her own quiet, sensible way ; while the genius of the family herself even discarded her prolific pen, and stuck to this new object of enthusiasm for a much longer period of time than she had ever been known to do in former instances. Indeed, 'Lorenzo the Lost,' though at the most critical stage of his romantic and thrilling career, had been recklessly consigned to that fatal top-shelf in the 'press,' which had already proved the tomb of so many flashes of intellectual fire.

These bazaar arrangements also necessitated a deal of intercourse between the Glendinnings and their good minister Dr. Randal, who was the chief promoter of the movement. Indeed, scarcely a day now elapsed that did not see the Doctor rounding the corner that separated his own house on the east side of the Square from that of the Glendinnings on the south ; while his face was seen to light up with a fresh touch of cheerfulness or sparkle of fun as he encountered some of the younger members of this happy and warm-hearted family.

Mr. Towie was also frequently to be met—flying,

as was his wont—in the direction of No. —, eager to be the bearer of fresh intelligence, perhaps, or the suggester of some new idea on the all-important subject.

Other things, however, were not forgotten, nor other people forsaken, meanwhile. Alice, for instance, visited her district faithfully, making herself better and more intimately acquainted, week by week, with the various characters to be found there. And Arthur, on his part, was carrying on his little class with more success than ever. It was wonderful how much ground his boys had gone over already, and how their interest had been awakened and deepened concerning many branches of study, both sacred and secular. The history of their own land, for one thing, had assumed a much more real and lively aspect in their eyes; and when Alice Glendinning played to them, as she often did, the grand old Jacobite songs, it was with a full and intelligent appreciation that they joined in singing the words, and not after the manner of Geordie Roy, one of the most musical of their number, who, in the earlier part of the session, had given an answer somewhat wide of the mark.

Geordie had sung—and sung remarkably well, too—from ‘The Auld Hoose:’

‘An’ the leddy, too, sae genty, there sheltered Scotland’s heir,
An’ clipp’t a lock wi’ her ain hand frae his lang yellow hair.’

'Now, Geordie,' cried Patricia, who had dashed into the room for something, 'are you quite sure you know who *he* was ?'

'Wha?' asked Geordie, staring very hard.

'Why, the man whose hair the old lady cut off, to be sure!'

'Ou ay, I ken *that!*' exclaimed Geordie, very much relieved in his mind. 'It was *Samson!*'

Arthur Glendinning laughed heartily, while Pat rushed out of the room, too much shocked to reply. But they knew all about 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' now, and about many a better and more respectable hero, too.

It was on one of those sweet, clear evenings of the lengthening spring that Jock Halliday, having finished his lessons, and having lingered behind his companions to take one more look at his favourites in the back garden—the Persian rabbits—was at last slowly leaving the Glendinnings' house for his own home. At that moment a quick step was on the pavement by his side, and a familiar voice said :

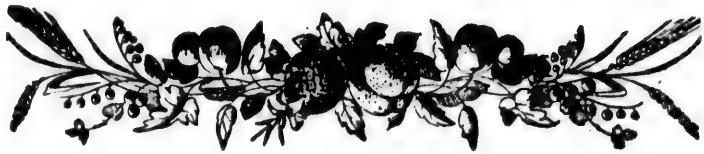
'Jock Halliday! The very man I wanted.'

Jock turned and gladly recognised the minister.

Dr. Randal was a man of slight, spare form, and rather under middle height, yet so well-proportioned that it would never have occurred to any one to call him a 'little man.' A sort of mild dignity, peculiar to himself, gave a tinge of reserve to his intercourse

with strangers ; but to more intimate friends his warm and graceful courtesy added a fresh charm to his society. [Edinburgh was long privileged to claim this philanthropic clergyman—so pure and beautiful in character, so refined and cultivated in mind and manners—as one of her best and most useful citizens ; and when at last the veteran soldier of the Cross laid down his arms, many a grateful heart, many a loving memory turned sorrowfully towards his distant grave beside the blue waters of the Mediterranean.]





CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. TUCKER AND HER VISITOR.

'**H**E very man I wanted,' repeated the minister. 'I wish this letter delivered to my brother, and to have an answer from him, as soon as may be, to-night, Jock. Could you go over with it now to Melville Street, wait for a reply, and then bring it to my house? I will take it as a great favour if you will do so. It is a matter of some little importance, and I know I can trust *you*, Jock, not to loiter by the way.'

'Ou ay, sir,' said Jock readily. 'I hae naethin' else on hand jist the noo. I'll no be lang o' stappin' wast.' He was highly pleased both with the commission and the compliment, though he tried to speak with his usual *nonchalance*.

And so, having received his instructions, he set off at a rapid pace with a letter in his breast pocket addressed to Dr. Randal, — Melville Street, promising to be back as soon as possible.

Melville Street looked rather dismal in its spacious and solemn west-end grandeur, with the red flush of the late sunset still lingering on its windows, and only a chance passer-by now and then disturbing the silence of its pavements. Jock almost started as his own tackety shoes rang on their unfamiliar flags, and he touched the bright brass knocker at No. — with some nervous trepidation. The door was opened immediately by an old housekeeper, in a rusty black silk gown, large apron, and cherry-ribboned cap, who spoke in a high, shrill voice, with a Cockney accent, which Jock did not easily understand.

'Yes, young man,' she said in answer to Jock's bashful inquiry, 'this is the right 'ouse; but my master is not at 'ome, nor won't be for 'alf-an-'our yet, most likely; so if you must 'ave an answer to-night, you 'ad best come in and wait a bit. If this is from my master's brother, as I reckon it is, it must be attended to—not a doubt of it.'

Jock hung back modestly, saying he would call again in half an hour for the answer; but Mrs. Tucker being indeed rather anxious for some one to enliven her solitude that evening, courteously renewed her invitation.

'You can wait in my own parlour, young man, and welcome. There is a nice bit o' fire on, for the hevenings is still chilly; and me bein' all alone in

this great big 'ouse makes me feel lonesome, I do declare !'

So Jock followed Mrs. Tucker into her own trig little parlour on the ground floor, and sat down by the fire, while she bustled about the room, 'rummaging' for some keys she had lost, and carrying on her monologue all the time.

'Yes, it's a bit lonesome, as I say ; but that minx Martha 'ave set up a young man of her own this last term, and she *will* allays be haskin out to rake about the streets with him—convenient or inconvenient, it's all one to Martha! Often I says to her, "Martha, mark my words! These young men o' yours 'll bring you no good yet. Look at the way they've taken to lately—assassinatin' the very gals they 'ave kept company with! Cleaving of their skulls with 'atchets, an' bangin' off revolvers at 'em, or blowing 'em up with gunpowder! It's enough to put young men out o' the fashion, Martha," says I. "Do just read the *Hevenin' Noos* for yourself about it," says I.'

Jock felt rather sorry for the absent Martha having the subject of sweethearts presented to her in such a discouraging light ; but Mrs. Tucker looked as if her 'bark might be worse than her bite.' She had found the keys now, and took her own arm-chair opposite to him, and prepared for a more regular chat.

'You've a bit o' crape on your cap, young man?' she remarked in a tone of inquiry, and before long Jock had confided to her the whole story of the 'broon kadies,' and his father's death, in which the old housekeeper took a lively interest, albeit greatly in the dark as to the malady in question.

'They're a sair trouble, them!' quoth Jock.

'Ah, indeed, yes! Trouble to be sure, as you say, my lad. But what may your name be, by the way?'

'Jock—John Halliday, that is,' answered Jock.

'Why! the very name of the book as I've been a-readin' of this afternoon. To be sure it is—*John Halifax—Gentleman*. See, there it is in print, John; or Jock, as you Scotch folks say!'

Mrs. Tucker flourished a greasy-looking volume before his eyes, and Jock was too much confused to be able to contradict her.

'Well, you don't just want the "gentleman" after it, I suppose?' she went on, laughing good-humouredly. 'But who knows wot you may be, some day? And "'ansom is that 'ansom does" is allays my motto. You see, John Halifax, I took up this vollum by chance, as it were, for that idle piece Martha had left it about. So I comes upon a pretty bit about a little blind girl called Muriel, an' that set me a thinkin', John Halifax; I do assure you it did.'

Jock showed much more interest in the book as soon as the little blind girl was mentioned.

'That maun be a fine story,' he said.

'Yes, indeed, John Halifax, a very fine story; but wot I thought about it was this. If that poor little creatur had only been alive in my master's day, who knows but he might 'ave cured her, as he has cured so many? Ah! wot a blessed thing it would 'ave been for that poor father as doated upon her so—deary me, so it would.'

This was too much for Jock.

'Hooh!' he said rather contemptuously, 'there's nae man leevin' can dae the like o' that.'

Mrs. Tucker drew herself up proudly, and smoothed out the folds of her apron with some asperity.

'I beg you will remember, young man, *who* my master is. Dr. Philip Randal, the most celebrated hoculist as this blessed world 'as never seen. That means a doctor for the *heyes*, young man! for, perhaps, you do not know *that* either?'

Jock shook his head doubtfully.

'Maybe sae,' he answered, 'maybe sae, but I never heard his name afore.'

'Never 'eard his name!' It was quite a shriek that accompanied these words. 'Never 'eard the name of *Dr. Philip Randal*, a man as the whole

of Europe, not to mention the Continent, is proud of! But I pity your ignorance, young man. You will know better in time.'

Jock was quite frightened at what he had done, and hastened to express his great regret, saying that he knew himself to be only a very ignorant fellow, and that he would like much to hear of this great man of whom Europe was so proud. Mrs. Tucker's ruffled feathers were soon smoothed again, and she proceeded to discourse fluently on a very congenial theme.

'Not only Europe and the Continent,' she began, 'but the British dominions as well—all know the name of Dr. Philip Randal, and 'ave 'eard of his wonderful cures. There may be savage Hi'lands, young man,' she added in an argumentative tone, —'there may be—I do not denige it—where people 'ave not 'eard of my master; but if these are poor benighted critturs as worship stocks an' stones, and wear next to nothin' but some feathers on their 'eads, who can wonder at them?'

Jock admitted that these unfortunate savages were not so much to blame, but felt that he must class himself along with them. He also expressed a desire to hear some of the wonders performed by this celebrated man.

'The most *re-mar-kable*—cures!' said Mrs. Tucker, holding up her hands and turning up

her eyes. ““Don’t call ‘em cures,” says my friend Mrs. Muggins to me—“don’t call ‘em *cures*, my dear, but *miracles!*” “No,” says I, “Mrs. Muggins. *No!* It would be contrary to Scripture,” says I, “and that I will not give in to. We are poor human beings,” says I, “so don’t name the word miracle to me!” But if you could ‘ave seed the poor critturs over in Germany, John Halifax, w’ere me an’ my master ‘ave been for years, a-comin’ day arter day with their cattertacks an’ one thing an’ another, as blind as beetles, an’ then seed them agoin’ ‘ome some fine day lookin’ you full in the face an’ cryin’ with joy at the sight—believe me, John Halifax, you’d ‘ave said Mrs. Muggins warn’t far out!—yer would indeed!”

Jock scratched his head violently. Something was evidently working in his mind, and this was his usual way of helping it out.

‘Folk aye says,’ he ejaculated at last, ‘that a man canna open the een o’ them that’s born blin’.’

‘Born blind? No, John Halifax, neither they can. That’s in the Scriptures, as I said before, and that I never will go agin. But I’ve ‘eard my master say, over and over again, that if ever they saw at all, were it but for a day, they might be cured. If so be other circumstances were favourable, an’ they fell into the hands of a skilful

hocolist—one like my master, you know ; but there are very few like him.'

Jock's countenance brightened considerably. Little Effie, of whom he had been thinking, had not actually been born blind, but had seen, though only for a short time during her infancy, and this Jock had learned from Agnes Bruce only lately.

'He'll get a gey lot o' siller for a' that, I'm thinkin',' suggested Jock with a new idea stirring in his mind and making his colour rise.

'Silver—John Halifax, silver!' cried the old housekeeper disdainfully; 'never less than a gold piece crosses my master's hand, I do assure you. One at the very least for a consultation, as it is called, and then'—

But the good old lady was suddenly interrupted by the sharp click of a latch-key, and then a quick step across the hall.

'Any letters for me, Mrs. Tucker?' asked the Doctor in a cheery voice. 'Oh, only this note? Let me see it.'

In a few minutes Jock was despatched on his return journey with a reply in his pocket. He strode hastily along, whistling softly to himself as he went, his shaggy head full of a new idea.



CHAPTER XIV.

'GOING DOWN HILL.'

Twas only too true about poor Willie Bruce. For months past he had been going from bad to worse; getting more and more taken up with Tam Lowrie and the roystering 'politeecians' of the Auld Harrow Inn, and less and less so with his own innocent fireside circle. There were anxious and troubled looks now on Agnes Bruce's once happy countenance, and little Effie's frock was very shabby, and her round cheeks were growing thin and white—for it was little indeed of the week's wage that came in now-a-days; while many and many a day Willie only lounged, idle and sulky, at his own hearth, too heavy and headachy even to attempt his work.

All this culminated at last, as might very naturally be expected, in a sharp and brief dismissal. And now his poor wife felt that the dark shadow she had so long feared had indeed closed around her. It was a brave resistance she had made all these

months back, doing her best to keep the wolf from the door, and all warm and well within. Both ends *had* been made to meet somehow, though it was a sore pull; but now the worst had come to the worst, and there was little before them but to ask for help—even charity—from relatives in the old Fifeshire village who could but ill afford to give it.

Agnes Bruce had a spirit of independence within her, born of the good old Scottish peasantry, and this was a bitter pill for her to swallow. But as the weeks wore on, and there was no word of Willie getting into work again, and when the needle-work she toiled over early and late utterly failed to support them, it had to be done.

How bare and desolate the little room looked, now that so many of their best bits of furniture had silently disappeared one by one in some quiet gloaming hour—the pawnbroker best knew where! But perhaps the hardest lines were in the fact that Willie himself was so sorely changed—so cross and sullen now to the wife who loved him so dearly, and so short and snappish to the little children, once all his pride and delight.

The Lowries themselves were not without some sort of compunction for the ruin they had been instrumental in bringing about. Tam smoked his black cutty pipe more thoughtfully by the fire now, and sometimes delivered an interlocutor on the case.

'Ye see, wife,' quoth Tam, 'there's a differ amang heids as weel as amang feet. Some men hae heids that can cairry a' thae wechty affairs o' the State an' no be a hair the waur ; some, again, are that wakely that their brains jist gae bizzin' roun like a tee-totum when they try to get a grupp o' the subjeck. An' that's the way, I'm thinkin', wi' Wullie Bruce.'

'*Him* a tee-totum !' skirled the faithful partner of Tam's joys and sorrows. 'Ye're as like ane yersel, Tam, as Wullie Bruce is ! It's jist thae sleekit scoon'reis that gang up till Towie's meetin's that's ca'd that ! An' they tell me Jock Halliday's ane o' them mair betoken. It's aneuch to pit tee-totums oot o' faushion to hae Jock ane o' them !'

'Hoots, woman ! It's *tee-tottles* ye're thinkin' o' ! As Sandy Wudd says, "Talk to a woman, an' ye talk to a fule."

'I'd just like to hear Sandy say that till's ain wife !' cried Mrs. Lowrie triumphantly. 'There'd be geyen few hairs left in *his* carroty pow or he gat his answer ! It's "*no* ilka cock that caws best in its ain midden," in ma opeenion !'

Mrs. Lowrie chuckled so long and loudly over this new rendering of an ancient proverb, and over the imaginary defeat of the scurilous 'Sandy Wudd,' that she had quite recovered her good humour by the time she was done, and the course of domestic converse ran more smoothly after that.

Jock Halliday slipped into the Bruces' garret for a few minutes on his return home that evening, having it in his mind to introduce the subject of Dr. Philip Randal and his wonderful cures, if he saw the slightest grounds of hope that the family might ere long be able to afford a consultation. But things looked worse and more discouraging even than he had imagined. Willie Bruce, with eyes bloodshot and heavy, and hair matted and wild, had got to the defiant stage, and sat moodily by the hearth, growling at all the world in general and his late employers in particular. He announced his intention of leaving the country immediately (by what means he did not condescend to explain), and no longer seeking work from a blackguardly and rascally company of scoundrels and tyrants that had screwed all the life out of him, and given him no more than dog's wages for it all. No! *he* was a free man and a citizen as good as any of *them* were, and *he* wasn't going to be trampled into the dust for *their* patent leather to tread upon! Not *he*! He had done that long enough to please *some* people (here he gave his poor wife a very withering look!)—some people who showed mighty little gratitude for it too—but he was done with that! Just see if he wasn't! 'The rank is but the guinea stamp, the man's the'—

'Wheesht, man!' interrupted Jock Halliday at this stage of the proceedings, 'dinna mak a fule o'

yersel nae mair nor ye are ! That's "cauld kail het again" o' Tam Lowrie's—we a' ken that jaurgon !'

Willie turned an infuriated look upon this impudent youth, and rose as if to throttle him ; but Agnes Bruce stepped quickly in between them, and with a new tone of authority in her voice, bade her husband sit down again, and Jock to leave them for the present. While Jock turned reluctantly away he was arrested by a little incident, very trifling in itself, but which proved sufficient to keep him awake for an hour or two that night.

Willie Bruce had staggered back to his chair at the resolute bidding of his helpmeet, but as he did so his eye caught sight of poor little Effie's treasured 'penny pig,' now well-nigh full of copper coins, with a modest admixture of silver.

Many and many times the little blind child jingled these gaily to herself, or in her mother's ear, prattling all the while of bonnie summer days to come, when 'faither' would take them all to 'Lairgo Bay' to hear the big waves plashing round the rocks, and to get a fine sail in Geordie Sharp's boat.

Agnes Bruce could only sigh when Effie said all this, knowing how faint and far away those golden dreams of happier days were fast becoming in her own heart. Still she would not dash the one little cup of pleasure from the tiny hands that had so few to carry. And Effie's store was

safe enough—she had never doubted that! However pinched and straitened the family circumstances might be, the thought of borrowing one penny from Effie's pig had not once even occurred to her. It could not have been safer in the bank itself, with all its bolts and bars and fire-proof safes, than it was in this stepmother's hands.

But Willie Bruce's fevered, bloodshot eyes had rested on the brown crock often enough lately with a hungry, covetous look, and to-night—in his bitter and rebellious mood—he went farther than that. He even clutched the treasure with his shaking hand, and tried to push it into one of the pockets of his shabby coat. But Agnes was quicker than himself. She darted on him like lightning, her mild face changed in a moment to one of indignant scorn, and seizing the drunkard's weak, nerveless arm, forced him to resign his prey.

'Ye fause-herted loon!' she exclaimed; then, instantly falling back into her usual tender and gentle ways, 'O! Willie, Willie! wad ye meddle wi' the wean's bit gear?—*yer wee blin' lassie!*'

Willie did not answer. He slunk back to his seat silent, and perhaps ashamed, while his wife replaced the toy with trembling haste. Jock had sprung forward to help her, but seeing it was unnecessary, hastened to withdraw altogether, as she silently motioned him to do.



CHAPTER XV.

'STOP THIEF!'

JOCK HALLIDAY passed but a restless night. What with his recent excitement about the Penny Pig, and Willie Bruce's attempted raid on it, besides wandering thoughts and wild conjectures regarding the great eye-doctor and one particular cure he might yet accomplish, he found it quite impossible to fall into his usual deep, unbroken slumber. It was only four o'clock when he started from his bare, comfortless bed, wide-awake, and firmly resolved not to lie another minute, but to go out and see what the 'caller air' would do to cool his heated brain and refresh his wearied powers.

The cold grey dawn was just coming in through the dingy, uncurtained window of their little garret. It was too soon to disturb his mother, who snored and slumbered blissfully, surrounded by her numerous flock in the big tent bed beyond the fireplace;

and Jock's toilet arrangements being of the briefest and simplest description on all occasions, were now minimized so as not to arouse even the most wakeful of the family.

In a few moments he found himself standing at the 'stair-fit,' looking sleepily enough up and down the steep Candlemaker Row, which was as yet shrouded in silence and slumber. Now that he was out in the open air, what was he to do? Where was he to go? Mr. Braid's bakehouse did not open till five at the earliest.

Suddenly there was a swift foot on the stairs behind him—a man banged up against him, and almost sent him spinning into the middle of the road. At the same time he heard the jingle of some coins in the man's pocket—a curious sort of jingle too, hard and loud, as if they were contained in some box or coffer—a peculiar sound, yet one not unfamiliar in Jock's ears. The man had darted past him, and was about to rush down towards the Grassmarket, when, quick as thought, Jock Halliday gripped him by the sleeve.

'Wullie Bruce!' he ejaculated. He could say nothing more. He knew now the man's errand, and what the rattling sound was. Willie Bruce had stolen his blind child's pennies after all, and was off to turn them into whisky as soon as ever the publicans would let him!

'Hands aff!' growled the older man with an

oath. ‘I’ll fell ye to the plainstanes gin ye dinna lowse yer grip !’

He was a strongly-built man, and, though now but the wreck of what he had been, he was stronger still for the moment with fury and desperation. With one fierce thrust he managed to get the better of his antagonist, who, of course, was but a half-grown stripling, very insufficiently fed.

Poor Jock’s head suffered pretty severely, being actually *ground* against the wall, while the full force of Willie Bruce’s left hand descended at the same time upon the luckless pate. And then the reckless drunkard was off like the wind upon his miserable and selfish expedition !

For a few seconds Jock lay stunned and almost unconscious upon the steps, but no longer. As he said himself afterwards, ‘anger did him mair guid than ony cordial could hae dune.’ He was so determined that the villain should not succeed after all Agnes Bruce’s efforts—or should not escape easily—and with *that* prize too !

Swifter than one can tell it, Jock was after his opponent ; down to the wide open Market, that was just beginning to awake—across it and up the Bow—round again by George IV. Bridge and back to the other end of their own narrow Row. So it was they went, Willie Bruce flying like the guilty, hunted creature he was, and Jock tearing along after him in red-hot pursuit. Jock was

gaining on his adversary every moment, and his eager excitement made him forget all about the pain he felt, and the blood that was streaming down his face and on to his ragged shirt. He was almost done, though, for want of breath and want of vigour, when Bruce darted up a dark entry at the Cowgatehead, which they had once more reached in their circuitous flight. It was a narrow, filthy place, but it belonged to a ruinous and deserted tenement, and so was quiet and secure of interruption. Here Bruce turned boldly on his pursuer, and began to wrestle with him as before. It would soon have gone very hard with the lad, but not even at the worst did he relinquish his efforts at the recovery of little Effie's treasure.

'Gie me back Effie's bawbees,' he articulated as well as he could while the struggle went on. 'Just gie me *thaim*, an' I'll lat ye gang yer ain gait!'

'*You*, ye vaigabon' loon that ye are! What business hae *you wi'* my bairn's siller? Can I no dae what I like wi't mysel'?'

'*No!*' said Jock stoutly, though his breath was beginning to fail him sadly, and the burly countryman's hand was still tightening upon his throat.

'Are ye—a man—ava, that—ye can—rob the puir blin' lassie?' he managed to ejaculate with difficulty.

'Ha! ha!' laughed the other scornfully—a wild and miserable laugh. 'Blin' folk are the best to rob, for they canna see ye—div ye no ken that?'

The cruel and pitiless jeer roused Jock's failing powers. He threw himself afresh upon his antagonist, and fairly wrenched the brown, jingling thing out of his clutch. As he did so he retorted on the heartless father :

'*Blind?* Ay, God be thankit she couldna see it was her ain faither's haun' that robbed her! Oh, man! there's maybe better een than oors that watch *her* an' the like o' her!' .

Poor Jock! This outburst of rough and homely eloquence seemed destined to be his last effort! Was it the lingering chime of that text he had heard Alice Glendinning teaching some little ones in her Sunday class to repeat, only a short time before, '*Their* angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven'?

It was a rough blow that felled him to the ground almost before the last words had left his lips, and he lay bleeding profusely and quite unconscious at the foot of the broken, deserted stairs.

Willie Bruce, terrified now at what he had done, was about to fly, but to his horror and astonishment found himself pinioned by two strong policemen, who had just then entered the stair, attracted by the voices within.

Their bull's-eye lanterns flashed light instantly on Jock's pale and blood-stained countenance, and that sight made the unhappy drunkard's overthrow complete. He had no longer any nerve to resist,

or any desire to fly. He only threw himself down, sobbing bitterly beside what he supposed to be the dead body of his former friend, slain by his own hand, and refused to answer any inquiries made by the officers of justice.

In a few minutes, however, these gentlemen had arranged the affair according to their own ideas. It was a case of common theft, they decided. Here was the booty, and these two drunk men had quarrelled over the division of it, as was quite usual and very natural in the circumstances. A stretcher was soon procured for the insensible prisoner, and the other was handcuffed and marched in procession after it between two other policemen, quickly summoned for the occasion. And in this fashion poor Jock and the more unhappy Willie Bruce, along with little Effie's jingling penny pig, were conducted up the Bow and down the High Street to the gloomy regions of the police station, there to await the leisure of the magistrates.

It was quite daylight now, and the sun had broken cheerily through his thick mantle of grey, and was lighting troops of workmen on their various ways. Many a one looked round as the little band moved slowly past, and not a few recognised Jock and his comrade, wondering what mischief they had got into so early in the day. But the police encouraged no conversation, and the affair remained a mystery.



CHAPTER XVI.

'IN THE POLICE OFFICE.'

BY the time he arrived at the office Jock Halliday was so far recovered as to sit up and look wildly about him, staring at the blank walls and the burly officers round him as if they were all figures in a dream.

'Whaur am I?' he muttered, struggling to free himself from a policeman's grasp. 'Man, I maun be awa till my wark! It's braid daylight. Let me gang, I tell ye!'

'Eh, Jock,' cried poor Willie Bruce, bursting into tears anew at this voice from the slain,— 'eh, Jock, I'm rael blythe to hear you. An' to think ma ain hand was to gie ye yer death-blow. Oh, man, I couldna hae tholed that!'

Jock glared savagely on his late antagonist.
'What are ye haverin' about, ye mickle gowk?

Whaur's the bairn's siller? Gin ye daur to tak it, ye black scoon'rel'—

'Come, come, my fine fellow,' interrupted the representative of the law, 'none of this brawling here, you know. You seem to have got out of the doctor's hands all of a sudden; but you're still in ours, you know—mind that!'

Jock only gaped in reply, and fell back in his chair, being still faint from loss of blood. It now behoved the other prisoner to clear up matters a little, which he attempted to the best of his ability.

'Ye see, sirs,' he began slowly and hesitatingly, hanging his head with shame and confusion,— 'ye see, I've been a black sicht to mysel' an' a' body belongin' to me. It's drink that's dune for me, sure aneuch, an' I'll ne'er get ma heid up again in this warld. I gaed that far that I took my ain wee lassie's bawbees, an' her a sichtless bairn! God forgie me'—

His voice quivered, and he broke down entirely here. The sergeant of police lifted little Effie's 'pig' as he said this, and shook it carelessly.

'This?' he asked curtly.

'Ay, ay!' sobbed Willie, 'that's just it—the verra thing she was sae fond o'. I'm a black-hearted villain for ever thinkin' o't; but I ne'er

felt hoo black I was till that puir laddie's bluid
was drappin' on the plainstanes—bluid shed by
ma ain hand! And him aye the best an' kindest
freen' we've had! God forgie me for this crime,
but I can never forgie mysel, e'en though the
laddie has been brocht back as frae the deid
again!"

And here poor Willie's emotions overcame
him entirely, and he covered his face with
his hands, and rocked to and fro as if in a
perfect agony of shame and remorse.

"Haud yer havers, man!" said a rough but
kindly voice familiar to his ear. "A body wad
think I was baith streekit an' kisted to hear ye
speak! But deed I'm no just sae easy sattled!"

Jock was interrupted here by the return
of the police surgeon, who had gone for
some appliances, and was come to examine his
wounds. Bruce was immediately removed to a
lock-up cell on the basement, without being
allowed to utter one word, whether conciliatory
or otherwise.

Some of Jock Halliday's wounds were serious
enough in their way, and after dressing them
the doctor recommended that he should remain
quietly where he was, stretched on two chairs
till sleep and rest should restore him to his
usual vigour.

'Me bide here!' exclaimed Jock in dismay. 'In the *Pollis Office!* Me! An' Maister Braid's shop open an hour syne an' naebody to mind the oven. Na, na, sir, I canna bide here the noo!'

In his fervour Jock had started to his feet while he spoke, but in so doing verified the doctor's statement that his strength was temporarily exhausted, for he fell suddenly back into the arms of the nearest policeman, and fainted right away. When he next came to himself he found himself lying quite alone in a different room, and on a low, bare truckle bed. He felt giddy and weak whenever he raised his head; so, after one or two vain efforts, he resigned himself to his fate, and lay still and silent, staring at the grim white-washed walls round him, and the narrow window overhead, whose cross-bars seemed to grudge admission to some murky daylight.

However unfortunate Jock's position might be, it was certainly infinitely preferable to that of his companion in the floor below. Willie Bruce lay prostrate on the ground, cold and damp and hard as that was, his breast heaving, his whole frame shaking with the newly-awakened tempest of penitent emotion. It was in vain that the various officials plied him with questions; he

would return no further answer than that he was 'a black-herted villain, and wished he was at the bottom o' Lairgo Bay.'

That statement being perhaps too poetical for these practical functionaries, was but indifferently received, and by and by, as some more exciting cases came in, the miserable man was left alone to bemoan himself as he might.

So passed the weary morning hours till high noon sounded from the silvery chimes of St. Giles', not very far from this dreary abode, but out in the air and light of freedom, where the old cathedral raised its fine crown of fretted stone up to the blue heavens above it, as if to tell the crowds of toiling, struggling, care-laden men and women always passing and repassing, that their hearts and treasures should be set on high.

At mid-day, however, things took a new turn, and that rapidly. Bailie Middleton was on the bench, and before him some half-dozen cases were promptly brought, and as promptly decided. That of Jock Halliday and Willie Bruce was simple enough, as neither had ought to say against the other but what the other freely corroborated. They were not alone at the bar. News of their seizure had soon reached the Candlemaker Row, and of course in a highly exaggerated form. Jock was said to be almost if not quite killed,

and Willie was understood to be in danger of transportation, if not capital punishment.

'I've aye said,' pronounced Mrs. Lowrie, speaking in a loud tone, as usual, from her favourite rostrum, the first landing,—'I've aye said thae twa wad come tae nae guid! The tane a fule an' the tither a hypocreet. What could ye expect?'

'Aweel, neebor,' said a gossip by her side, 'ye've a richt to say't, for ye'll ken well about Willie Bruce. He was aye gaun wi' yer ain gudeman.'

'*My* gudeman has a heid on his shouthers, ma woman,' retorted Mrs. Lowrie, 'an' he canna be responsible for a' the fowk that comes rinnin' to hear what he thinks o' this an' that—State affairs an' the like.'

While this passage of arms went on, Agnes Bruce and Mrs. Halliday hastily repaired to the police office with tearful countenances and anxious, heavy hearts. There they stood in the background as the prisoners were led into the dingy room, where the Bailie dispensed justice in his usual summary and satisfactory manner.

Mrs. Bruce's neat and respectable appearance, as well as the quiet and modest way in which she answered all questions put to her, aroused the sympathy and interest of the magistrate, and he treated the reckless husband to a very stern and sharp reproof. After which, administering a milder

admonition to Jock Halliday, he dismissed the whole company, and called for the next case to be brought on.

It was a sombre and sorrowful enough group, however, that slowly wended away from the police office. Jock was too indignant at his own unmerited detention to express himself in any terms, while tears checked even the customary eloquence of Mrs. Halliday, and Agnes Bruce could only hold silently by Willie's trembling arm, praying in her heart for some word of wisdom to be given her to say in this dark and perplexing hour. Willie himself moved slowly along, with eyes fixed steadfastly on the ground, and hopeless dejection written on his face. If there was one ray of light in the picture, it was only visible to Jock Halliday's eyes, and that was in the fact that *Effie's penny pig was safe and sound.*



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CHAPTER XVII.

LUCKY LAW'S LEDGER.

LHE months that followed saw hard enough times in the two garret homes of No. 97. Willie Bruce, never of a very robust constitution, had thoroughly ruined his health by the unwonted tack of dissipation into which his intimacy with the great 'Polyteecian' had unhappily dragged him. That last miserable morning ending in the police cell had put the copestone on this work of destruction, and in less than a week an Infirmary chair conveyed him to the fever hospital in a state which left but slender hopes of his recovery. Ten weeks the fever ran its course, and then, though the crisis was safely passed, he lay weak and helpless as a child for nearly as many weeks following.

Agnes Bruce found it a hard time indeed. She was not really so unhappy as she had been ; for this illness, alarming as it was, seemed light compared

to that terrible one which had been consuming her husband's mind, temper, and principles for many months before. She could hope now that, if he ever came back at all, he might come back an altered man—a sadder but a wiser one. And if he was doomed to die, she could at least think it possible that from that sore sick-bed he might pass away repentant and forgiven. Still she had her troubles to meet, not the least of which were little Effie's sorrowful face and her own baby boy's dwining aspect.

In the Halliday mansion things looked much more cheerful, though hard times did hang over it too. Jock and his mother fought bravely the battle of life, he in Mr. Braid's bakehouse and she at the Rubber Factory, and so between them they managed 'to keep the wolf from the door.' Betsey had resumed her skipping on the plainstones and other spring pastimes, and the younger ones, when released from the halls of learning, battered each other with their 'bannets,' and tumbled over one another on the stair very much as they had done in brighter days. Still they too knew what it was to have 'a stave out o' their bicker,' as the Scotch proverb has it, and became aware at not unfrequent intervals that the stomach is a living organ, and not merely a medical or scientific term.

Jock Halliday had often pondered deeply over

the old housekeeper's words, and the grand idea he had once formed of raising a 'gowd piece' for a consultation fee; but that golden fancy was becoming faint and shadowy now, almost as much so as the new moon, to which he wistfully looked now and again, turning a fourpenny-bit in his pocket as he did so, and wishing three wishes meanwhile. Whatever the two latter of these might be, the first was invariably the same, and it did not concern himself or any of the Halliday lineage.

'Hey, Jock, ma man! Is that you? Jist come in by for a meenit like a gude cratur as ye are! I'm sair fashed this nicht—I can tell ye that!'

It was the shrill metallic voice of Lucky Law that fell on Jock's ear as he was sauntering along the Market one evening, his hands in his pockets, and ruminating deeply. By almost imperceptible degrees the ancient hostility between himself and the randy greenwife had slowly dwindled away. Perhaps Jock had lost the schoolboy element which made him so prone to torment her; and perhaps Lucky had tried more conciliatory measures. Any-way they had been quite on friendly terms now for some time back, and Jock often did little errands or odd jobs for her when required. But to-night it was something quite different that Lucky wanted. She sat at the foot of her own stair, with a huge cracked slate on her knees, rocking herself to and fro in

considerable distress of mind, while the withered greens and dejected leeks waved mournfully over her big frilled night-mutch as if in silent sympathy with her trouble.

'I canna bide this ava! It's ower muckle for flesh an' bluid to contend wi!' moaned poor Lucky.

'What is't that's wrang?' inquired Jock, bluff and brief as usual.

'*Wrang*, laddie? A' thing's clean wrang a' thegither! It's no ae thing nor anither—I wadna mind that, no me!—but it's jist the haill stock, stoup an' roup, pipe-clay an' pease-meal baurley an' blackenin', sybies, leeks, ingans, an' a' thing! Jist fair steered aboot, gin as ye had steered them wi' a stick. Tak this slate like a guid laddie, an' see if ye canna mak some mair sense oot o't than ma puir auld een can dae.'

Thus adjured, Jock Halliday took the slate, which evidently contained the last week's accounts, debit and credit, of the entire commercial system conducted by Miss Law.

It was indeed a wilderness of wild writing and wilder spelling, with figures much more nearly allied to the hieroglyphs of Egypt and Assyria than to those presented by English arithmetic.

'What'n a genius has pit thae accounts doon?' inquired Jock. 'It maun hae been Jumblin' Jess, I'm thinking.'

'Ye may weel ken that,' exclaimed Lucky, now more in anger than in sorrow, since she saw some way out of her difficulties. 'A muckle haverin' gowk she is; an' sister's bairn as she is to me, I'll no hae her dairken ma door again—no for a whiley onygate! Her to set up an' tall me she was a scholard noo, an' wad keep ma accoonts for me the week she was bidin' here, oot o' wark! An' me, like an auld fule, tae believe her tae! I nicht hae kenned weel eneuch what *Jumblin' Jess* would mak o' ma sklate; but eh, laddie, ye're a rael godsend to me this nicht, an' it'll a' come richt again or lang.'

Jock laughed quietly to himself as he thought of the change of days that must have occurred since he could be called a godsend by Lucky Law. 'It wud hae been a praisent frae another quarter aince on a day,' he muttered; but Lucky was engaged in a sharp encounter with some exacting customer on the subject of bath-brick, and did not hear him.

An hour and more Jock laboured at his task, comparing the hieroglyphics of *Jumblin' Jess* one with another, and so arriving at some idea of their meaning; arranging and compiling the various items on a clean sheet of paper, which at last presented to Lucky Law's critical survey a fair report of the last week's loss and profits; and as

the latter greatly exceeded the former on this occasion, she was lavish in her encomiums on Jock's scholarship and assiduity, concluding with a generous offer of no less than 'a shillin' a week' if he would undertake to be her clerk, so far as 'redding up the aforesaid sklate' went, once or twice a-week.

Jock, of course, accepted the offer thankfully. For a moment or two the thought occurred to him that this extra pay might be laid aside to accumulate in time to a real 'gowd piece,' but the idea faded away as he remembered the pinched state of matters at home. Jock told his mother, however, of the bit of good luck, handing her the shilling he had just received. What was his joy to hear that cheery matron exclaim :

'Na, na, ma laddie! That's a shillin' I'll hae nocht tae dae wi'. Ye'll e'en keep it for yersel, an mak yersel a bit braw for the Sabbath days and the like.'

'Hoots, mither! I'm no heedin' aboot that,' quoth Jock.

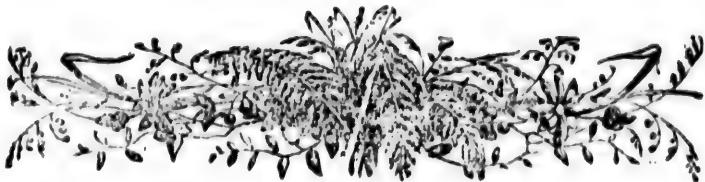
'Aweel, laddie, dae what ye like wi't, but no a penny o't will I tak; for, lat me tall ye, I've gotten a gran' rise mysel at the factory this day. Five shillin's mair nor I had; for the manager's awfu' weel pleased like, and I dinna ken but some o' yer freens doun yonder hae spoken a guid word for me. Hoosumever we're jist in clover

the noo ; an', Jock, my ain laddie, ye'll keep Lucky Law's shillin' till yersel. I'm no heedin' what ye dae wi't, sae lang as it doesna gang an ill gait.'

'Aweel, mither, we'll no say what'n a gait it'll gang jist yet,' said Jock with an amused smile. The gold piece had again gleamed before his imagination, though reason suggested that it must yet be very far away.

'It's a far cry to Lochowe!' Jock muttered to himself next morning as he went whistling down the stairs to his work. Twenty shillings would take twenty weeks, and that was five months at least. Well, they would pass away in time, and somehow he felt his heart grow lighter as he thought of this new project. All the day long Jock worked briskly at his loaves and bricks and 'penny baps,' and the dough seemed to dance lightly in the baking trough all the time to the tune of '*A shillin' a week! A shillin' a week!*'





CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BAZAAR.



QUEEN MARY'S BATH, HOLYROOD.

Bug's review' of old pots and pans and shovels,

ONCE again the green-robed smiling May had done her best to mantle the 'grey Metropolis of the North.' But it was not only the time of buds and blossoms in Auld Reekie; it was also the time of 'flittings,' with their inevitable confusion and distraction—straw filling the air and flying along the streets, — 'General

rusty grates and rickety chairs, being held all over the city. It was also the time of Synods and General Assemblies. Black coats and white neckcloths swarmed everywhere about, and everybody was on the *qui vive* to catch the first notes of their exciting controversies. Ministers' wives and daughters, too, displayed the freshest charms of the manse, dressed in the latest fashions of some provincial town, to the jaded eyes of the capital. Holyrood once more raised its drooping head, and forgetting the blood of Rizzio, which always lies so heavily on its conscience, and the mouldering bedsteads on which royalty had once reposed, opened its arms to receive a fresh tide of revellers and merrymakers, who gladly availed themselves of the free invitations to levees, dinners, and receptions given by His Grace the Lord High Commissioner.

And so it was a stirring time. Among the many families unusually occupied in receiving their clerical friends at this time were the Glendinns. They kept open house indeed in George Square, and many a happy gathering took place there. But they had something else to think of, too. The grand bazaar, for which they had been for half a year back toiling and troubling, hoping, fearing, doubting, and deliberating, was to come off on the 20th and 21st of the month. Of course the said clerical friends and their wives and

daughters had all promised to be present, though it was dubious whether, among so many other attractions, these promises were much worth. Preparations grew quite bewildering, and the house was in a state of blockade with boxes and hampers.

Mr. Glendinning took fright altogether, and retired to Thornydean for the week, from whence, however, he sent as much country produce as could reasonably appear at a fancy fair, including a splendid sheep from the Cheviot Hills, with a black face, and blue ribbon round its neck.

The day came at last. The Music Hall displayed a blaze of splendour almost unexampled in the annals of bazaar life. Dazzling, indeed, were the stalls with their blue and pink awnings, showing the names of many distinguished ladies who had consented to play at the pretty game of 'shopkeepers.' Ravishing, too, were the toilettes of the young ladies acting as their assistants. Of the goods displayed, it is needless to say more than that they were quite as brilliant, as superabundant, and perhaps as useless as bazaar goods usually are.

All honour to the genus, however! It is the right sort for 'raising the wind.' What modern church has not been built on a solid substratum of the same?

The 'fun of the fair' went on merrily all that day, after its more serious opening by a popular

divine of the city. Instead of a lull in business, which the Glendinnings had greatly feared, it soon became evident that a deadlock of eager customers was the more imminent danger. They had such lots of friends, both town and country ones, that they easily kept the first place among the amateur firms doing so brisk a trade around the hall.

Lady Dacres, a fat, fashionable old lady from their own county, was a customer much coveted by the others. She stuck, however, pretty closely to the Thornydean family, and positively seemed 'made of money' that day! What quantities of things she bought, and how her poor little lady's-maid followed her, gasping under her load of cushions, tidies, and other fluffy articles, and bristling all over with nick-nacks and toys!

Mr. Towie, too, was an unfailing devotee, though perhaps not quite so serviceable. He did his best, to be sure, lugging about the heavier articles, such as chairs and ottomans, for review, but had to endure the sharp lash of Miss Pat's censure occasionally for absurd mistakes he made regarding the uses and prices thereof.

'Oh! Mr. Towie!' she would exclaim, 'how could you say *ten shillings* for this splendid tea-cosey? Why, it is worth nearly a guinea, so, *of course*, must sell for two!'

Whereupon Mr. Towie would look penitent, but

happy, and declare he thought the cosey the cheapest he had ever heard of!

It was the opinion of Mr. Towie that Alice Glendinning never had looked so lovely as she did that day in her white muslin cap and apron, with the blue ribbons fluttering softly about her; but he admired only as he would have admired some 'bright particular star,' too far away from earth for him to think of. And so he was often fain to sun himself in the more ordinary sunshine furnished by Pat and her lively companions.

There was an enthusiastic burst of applause from the whole staff of workers that night, about eleven o'clock, when Dr. Randal announced from the top of a big packing-case that the day's sales had realized the handsome sum of £800! Then there was the next day to add to it, and the next night too, when it was expected there would be a grand clearing off of surplus stock, by means of rough-and-ready auctioneering, and other popular inventions.

Alice Glendinning had set her heart on giving tickets of admission on that last evening to her brother's class, and among others, Jock Halliday had, of course, one.

'I'm no heedin',' was at first Jock's wonted rejoinder, not very encouraging to the donor; but then she knew her way through the boy's nature,

rough-cast outwardly, but so gentle, even *polished*, beneath!

'You don't need to buy *anything*, Jock, mind that,' said his friend emphatically. 'Indeed, I am sure you *ought* not, in present circumstances, to waste even a sixpence on what can't be said to be even amusement to *you*. But I want you to see it, you know, that is all. I'm sure you will think it a pretty enough sight, too!'

Jock nodded his head and put the ticket in his breast pocket with a brief 'thanks,' but he privately resolved that one sixpence at least of Lucky Law's money would go to help the grand bazaar—even though it retarded the eventful consultation to which he was eagerly looking forward.





CHAPTER IX.

A GOLDEN SHILLING.

AMILITARY band was playing its loudest and liveliest next evening, when Jock Halliday and his companions entered the Music Hall. The noise and excitement going on, the glare of the lights, the brilliant colouring of the stalls, all conspired to bewilder them at first, and they could only wander round, jostling and being jostled, quite unable to think of any purchases.

Jock had been in luck that day. Half-a-crown had found its way into his pocket because he had caught the runaway horse of a rich old farmer in at the market; and Jock, being a kind-hearted fellow, had determined to devote it to his own home-circle. In the first place, little Davie, his favourite brother, was to be taken to the bazaar. His mother and Betsey had the first offer, but the state of their wardrobe just then proved an insurmountable obstacle. Davie, however, a bright-haired merry little fellow,

*

and a favourite in the stair, was soon rigged out in a 'loan collection' of garments fit for any society.

So a sixpence was cheerfully paid for Davie's admission, and he had another sixpence to buy what he liked for himself, and was supremely happy. Jock looked down at him several times to wonder at his glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, and to congratulate himself on the success of his plan. It was getting late when the whole party stopped in front of a most tempting array of miscellaneous goods, brilliantly illuminated, and purporting to be all offered to the public at the ridiculously low rate of one shilling each! The stall was kept by the Misses Sharpe, young ladies already well known in the Hall for business qualities well suited to their name. In fact they had been doing a roaring trade all day, rather to the detriment of some of the other fair stall-holders.

'Hae, Davie! tak this and buy something for me!' said Jock, shoving a shilling into his little brother's hand, quite proud to see the important look Davie put on at the thought of this commission. 'It maun be something it'll be a praesent for mother,' he continued. 'I want to tak her hame some bit thing, and ye'll chuse it for me, ye ken.'

Off ran Davie to the enchanting stalls, Jock and *

his comrades going on a little way, so as to leave him all the glory of the affair. Some ten minutes or more had elapsed before Davie made up to them again, laden with the purchase he had just accomplished. He was immensely proud of it himself, and evidently considered that he had done quite a stroke of business. Alas for Davie! His brother's face fell ominously, and his brows darkened, as he beheld the treasure, for it consisted of nothing more nor less than a pair of very old dingy-looking brass candlesticks!

Jock was seriously angry for a moment, and hasty words rose to his lips, but Davie burst out crying, and that disarmed him in a moment. He also caught at the idea originated by some of the other lads, that the unfortunate purchase might yet be exchanged for something more desirable. He ran back to the stall, and represented the case in as courteous terms as he could devise; but, to his great chagrin, the Misses Sharpe were inexorable. The candlesticks had been bought and paid for; it was getting late, and no one else was likely to buy them now, and they positively refused to think of an exchange.

Poor Jock! He could only sink down on an adjacent bench, and bemoan his unhappy fate, assisted by a chorus of sympathizing companions, and the remorseful, weeping Davie. '*Caun'lesticks!*'

he muttered helplessly. 'Twae auld rickles o' caun'lesticks, and hus that has gas tae i' the hoose. Eh, man, it's awfu'! Thae fo'k maun jist hae threepit on the bairn to tak them, an' he's no gotten nae sense yet, o' coarse. The mair sulé me to trust him wi the "bob!" Dinna greet, Davie, man! it's ma ain wight as weel as yours.'

Jock and his companions agreed in suspecting the Misses Sharpe to be capable of any villainy, such as entrapping young and inexperienced customers, and luring them on to ruin. The whole affair was very dark and dismal in their eyes.

A more cheering view of the subject was, however, taken by a young lady who happened to pass at that moment. It was Pat Glendinning, and being a genius, she readily understood the whole dilemma without any explanation.

'Why, Jock, these are something quite out of the common—you are in luck, I do declare!'

'Luck?' repeated Jock slowly. 'It's gey queer kin' o' luck this! An' we dinna burn caun'les in the Row, now, ony gait!'

'But they're *old*, Jock!' Pat almost shrieked into his ear. 'They're *awfully* old—I know they are. I know the lady who sent them to the bazaar. They must have gone in that lot *quite* by mistake!'

*

'Ou ay, I dinna doot they're auld. It's no that I'm heedin' aboot. They might hae rabbit up again gin they had been worth the trouble.'

'But they're *antique*, Jock!' again shrieked the genius. 'They're regular *Queen Anne* candlesticks! I'm *sure* they are!'

'Like aneuch,' sighed Jock. 'She might ha keepit them till hersel' for aught I care.'

But Pat had seized the treasures by this time, and was flying off round the Hall in search of her fashionable friend, Lady Dacres.

'Oh, Lady Dacres, do look at these! Regular, genuine Queen Anners, and no mistake! Mrs. Bracket sent them, and she has a regular museum of these things. *Would* you mind buying them of the poor boy who has got them by mistake, and doesn't in the least understand their value? He is quite miserable about them! Would you believe it? Only a poor baker's boy, though, you know, who really *can't* be expected'—

'Of course not!' interrupted her ladyship. 'How could he, poor boy? Why, it takes a perfect curriculum of study to appreciate these things, my dear. Let me see them. Yes; indeed they are *lovely*, my child! Oh, the *sweetness* of that delicate moulding! The quaint truthfulness of this fluted column. Patricia, my darling, you have made me quite envious of your baker's boy! He won't part

with these treasures under a fortune—a king's ransom !'

'Oh, indeed, Lady Dacres, he will let you have them for a mere trifle, and be *thankful!* Just wait till I ask him !'

Pat was off in a moment, and returned quickly with the tidings that Jock Halliday would consider himself lucky beyond measure to get his unfortunate shilling restored to him in lieu of the precious candlesticks. She found her ladyship still gloating eagerly over these gems, dilating to all around her on graceful curves and exquisite finish, which were all but invisible to such untutored eyes as theirs.

'*A shilling!*' she exclaimed. 'Yes, indeed, he shall have that.' But it was a *golden shilling* which Lady Dacres drew from her now well-nigh exhausted purse, and which she pushed into Pat's hand, saying, 'Pray, offer him this in my name, and say if *he* considers it sufficient, *I* am more than delighted with the purchase !'

In vain Pat remonstrated on this fresh extravagance. In vain she described the boy's disgust at his fate, and the value which a bit of silver had in his eyes. Lady Dacres was quite angry at the idea of cheapening the '*Queen Anners*.'

'Am I to deprive the poor innocent youth of his birthright,' she exclaimed in her usual high-flown

style of language, ‘simply because he is ignorant of its true value? Shall I give him a mess of pottage, and pretend that *that* is a fair equivalent for so divine a gift? My *beautiful* candlesticks! Indeed, I should have no pleasure in contemplating them, if they were to remind me of so base an action!’

So Jock Halliday was forthwith dragged up by Patricia to receive in person, with many bows and scrapes and muttered thanks, the shining sovereign, which he could hardly at all understand to be his own, Lady Dacres accompanying it by a few kind and gracious words, which the boy felt he would always treasure in his heart.

He made straight tracks for Miss Alice’s stall now, and actually laid out another shilling in some useful and pretty presents for his mother and all at home; for at that late hour things were going at the ‘tremendous sacrifice’ rate.

Alice Glendinning warmly congratulated Jock on his good fortune, but she was a little puzzled by his reply.

‘I’m no wantin’ them at hame to ken o’t—no jist yet,’ he whispered. ‘Wad ye mind keepin’ quate?’

‘No; certainly not, if you wish it, Jock,’ she returned hesitatingly. ‘But you don’t have many secrets from your mother, I hope; she would have been so glad to know of this.’

Jock hung his head.

'Ay, I ken that fine. But—but—Miss Alice, it's no for nae wrang I'm hidin'. Will ye trust me? It's no for lang.'

There was an earnest, pleading tone in his voice that touched her, and there was the usual open, honest look in his eyes when he raised them to her face. She was sorry in a moment for having ever suspected him.

'All right, Jock,' she said cheerily. 'Indeed, I can trust you or any of my boys. I will keep your little secret till you tell me. Don't be afraid.'

Soon after that the great bazaar, like everything else, came to an end, and silence and repose settled on the now empty Hall. Everybody was highly satisfied with its success—none more so than Dr. Randal, who learned with joy that £1000 would be left clear, after all expenses were paid, for his mission buildings.





CHAPTER XX.

A CONSULTATION.

MRS. TUCKER had a very busy time of it during all that Assembly season. So many people, taking advantage of their rare visit to the Metropolis, came to consult her master regarding their eyesight, that it became no sinecure to act as his portress. On one bright afternoon in particular, she was about to throw up the sponge altogether, and had given orders for 'that slut, Martha,' to get herself up for answering the door, and to mind her manners, and not usher the patients in all higglety-pigglety in a promiscuous way, as there was nothing more likely to make her good master angry than that was.

Martha's toilet, however, took some time to complete, whatever the study of manners might involve, and before she was ready Mrs. Tucker had opened the door to a couple of visitors so

agreeable to her mind, that strength and cheerfulness immediately returned.

'John Halifax, I do declare!' she cried, holding up her hands in surprise as she recognised her roughish-looking, hobbledehoy visitor of a few weeks back, carefully dressed and nicely brushed, shoe-blacked and hair-oiled, for an important call.

Jock laughed, blushed, and nodded, but seemed to trust entirely to the housekeeper's penetration to discover his errand.

'And what pretty little missy may this be?' continued Mrs. Tucker, turning to little Effie, who stood quietly beside her big protector on the doorstep, just shyly lifting her sweet, sunless eyes to where the kindly voice was coming from.

'It's the wee blin' lassie I was tellin' ye aboot,' said Jock bashfully. 'But ye'll maybe no mind?'

'Yes; indeed, I do, John Halifax, and a dear little thing she is too. But come away in, both of you, to my parlour, and tell me all about it. Has her mother sent her over here to see my precious master, or what? Eh? And 'ave you got a 'alf'-oliday, John, for you ain't often walkin' about like a gentleman at this time o' day, I reckon, otherwise?'

'Ma faigs, it's no jist a holiday,' answered Jock as he followed with Effie into the housekeeper's room, and half reluctantly drawing from his pocket

the right hand which had previously been hidden there. It was partially bandaged, but the marks of a terrible burn were easily visible beyond the straps.

'Why, you 'ave burnt yourself sadly! And 'ow did it 'appen?'

'It was a bit fire in oor bakehoose yestreen,' explained Jock. 'An' I caught the lowe some gait whan we was pitten't oot,' alluding in these very moderate terms to a conflagration which had agitated the West Bow from its summit to its base.

'Dear, dear!' exclaimed the housekeeper. 'Did I ever! No wonder you're hoff work for to-day, young man, an' will be, I dessay, for a week yet. And you must 'ave felt it terrible?'

'No verra bad,' said Jock stoically. 'An' 'deed I cudna help feelin' a kind o' gled o't for the sake o' an aff day, though I canna afford mony o' them the noo. But the maister was rael kind, an' said it wadna mak nae difference, aifter me helpin' to put oot the flames like.' Jock added the last sentence modestly, in a kind of apologetic tone.

Effie was being regaled with a huge piece of cake meanwhile, and a big orange lay in her lap to be carried home afterwards. So she was quite happy and content, while her guardian let Mrs. Tucker into the history of this little expedition.

'And now then, John Halifax,' said that lady at last, when all had been told, even to the matter of the brass candlesticks and Lady Dacres' munificent payment,—'now then, you want to see my master, and you shall see him as soon as that young curate goes out. He's 'ad such a time of it tryin' to get heye-glasses to suit 'im. If he's been 'ere once it's ten times, I believe; and nothin' but conceit in my hestimation. There he goes now, and 'e'll be ten minutes certain afore the 'all mirror a-brushin' of 'is whiskers an' adjustin' of 'is 'at.'

Mrs. Tucker hurried off to attend on this departing visitor, and returning shortly, requested Jock and little Effie to follow her. They did so, and were soon ushered into a handsome room, quite shady and softly carpeted, in which Jock's spirits rather threatened to forsake him, and Effie began to cry.

'Dinna greet, Effie,' whispered Jock, feeling the necessity of keeping up appearances with her,—'dinna greet. He's no gaun to eat ye up like the wolf in Red Ridin' Hood.' And Jock tried a laugh, but it seemed to die away among the velvet curtains and the luxurious furniture.

It was an unfortunate illustration. Effie, naturally a most imaginative child, at once recalled the scene in that sad drama, and felt persuaded that she was the very heroine in question. She sobbed more bitterly than ever, and Jock was in despair.

A moment later, however, the poor little blind child was lifted gently in a pair of strong arms, and a big hand smoothed away the tangled hair very tenderly from her eyes and brow, while a rich, low voice, soft as a woman's, asked what she was crying for.

'The wolf, the wolf,' sobbed poor Effie, struggling to get away from this unknown monster.

'Hoots, havers, Effie,' remonstrated Jock, quite ashamed of this absurd opening of the interview, which he had determined should be at least full of due ceremony and decorum. 'Dinna speak like a fule that gait; there's nae wolfs here, ye ken. They're a' in the story-books.'

But Dr. Philip Randal motioned him to be quiet, and sat himself down with Effie on his knee in a large arm-chair by the window.

'The wolf?' he asked, 'the one that met little Red Riding Hood long ago? Ah! but don't you know the end of that story?—how it all turned out to be a mistake, and the wolf didn't hurt her at all, at all, but just curled himself up at her feet and fell fast asleep, while she watched him and played with his long brown hair, so thick, and soft, and warm, just like this,' he added, making the child's little hand rub over his own thick, bushy beard of beautiful, tawny hair. 'Didn't you ever hear that before?'

Whether it was the musical voice or the gentle

touch that did it, one way or another Effie's fears were suddenly arrested and her spirit soothed. Her sobs ceased, and she sat quite still and content on the strange doctor's knee, listening with eager interest to this new development of an old story, her large lustrous eyes fixed on the face she could not see.

'That is right, that is right!' said the doctor softly to himself as he wheeled her imperceptibly more towards the light, and deftly arranged some lenses and instruments on the table by his side.

'And so you never heard that about the poor dear old wolf before?' he continued. 'No! Well, you know, it is quite a common story in a nice country far away, where I have come from, and the little girls and boys there are not afraid to meet that wolf. If they met him, they would only go and speak frankly to him, and stroke his long brown beard.'

Little Effie laughed softly, and of her own accord touched the good doctor's own beard as he had made her do before. He laughed too. It was evidently established as quite a little joke between them.

'So you are little Red Riding Hood and I am the wolf,' he said, 'and we have a great deal to say to each other. First you will tell me your name—your other name, you know. Then I may tell you more about the good-natured old wolf and his little friends.'

Effie told him her name, and her age, and many other pieces of information, such as that her father

was lying ill in the hospital, and that her mother had to sew all day long, and sometimes all night too, to buy meal for the porridge and milk to sup along with it. She also informed him that little Willie liked his porridge 'fine,' as she expressed it, but that she herself didn't care for 'them' very much. Also how this was Jock who had brought her here,—Jock Halliday, who lived next door, and who was so kind to her always, more particularly in bringing home cookies and 'bakes' sometimes for her tea; for Jock was learning to be a baker, and was to have a grand shop of his own some day, which she was to keep for him while he baked the bread and carried it home.

'Hoots, havers, Effie!' muttered the hero in question several times under his breath, for he was thoroughly ashamed of Effie's garrulity, and very much afraid that the doctor would be angry.

The doctor, however, was not losing time during this interesting discourse. He had managed to examine thoroughly the bright, beautiful eyes that were always raised to his own face, ready to catch his lightest word. It would have been impossible for any stranger to have guessed that Effie did not see her new friend. Dr. Philip had at once perceived that it was a very peculiar case, and one of immense interest from a professional point of view. Presently he turned to Jock, who still stood a little behind him, twisting his 'bonnet' nervously in his hands, and

trying to think how the 'gowd bit' might be most respectfully offered.

'So you are only a neighbour, my good fellow?' said Dr. Philip; 'not her brother, as I supposed. I am afraid you won't be able to tell me much about her; how the blindness came on, and so forth. No; I must see her parents before I can say anything definite. You may tell her mother that I shall look in some day. I won't ask her to come over here, as she is so overworked at present. Give me the right address, and then you and Effie may go for the present. Good-bye, little Red Riding Hood! You must keep a good look-out for the big brown wolf, you know—won't you?'

Jock wrote down Mrs. Bruce's address clearly and carefully on a slip of paper which the doctor handed to him. Then he felt that the tug of war had come. He slipped the sovereign from his waistcoat pocket, and laid it on the paper. Then shutting his eyes, as if he were about to set off some dangerous explosive, he shoved them both towards Dr. Randal, saying hurriedly :

'This is the address, sir; an' I was to gie ye this tae, an' to speir gin it was aneuch.'

The doctor stared at this unexpected speech, also at the gold piece, whose history he so little knew.

'*This?*' he said slowly. 'Oh, no! not to-day at least. Let the poor woman keep it at present for

necessary expenses. Let me see. You are quite to be trusted with it, I suppose?' The doctor spoke rather sharply this time, and Jock's face coloured deeply at the implied suspicion.

Poor Jock! It *was* hard to be suspected of any design to steal what was his own, or, at least, what he had so generously given away. But the flush of injured innocence and that of conscious guilt are not always to be distinguished from each other, and this time Dr. Philip Randal misinterpreted the signal.

'Give me the fee,' he said coldly. 'I shall return it myself. It is more correct to do so under any circumstances.'

Angry words rose to Jock's lips, the angriest he had ever felt tempted to utter. It required all his heroism—far more than it had taken for the bestowal of the money—to keep them from being spoken, but he remembered what issue was at stake. Could he run the risk of offending this wonderful doctor, and so ruining any chance there was of Effie's sight being restored? No, indeed, he could not!

Taking little Effie's hand in his, he just managed to make some sort of bow, and hurriedly withdrew. He did not even stay to speak a word or two with his friend Mrs. Tucker, who thought it very rude of him, and wound up a discourse on the subject to Martha by saying, 'Them Scotch 'as no more manners than the pigs, I do declare.'



CHAPTER XXI.

MORNING CALLERS.

THIS was not long before Dr. Philip Randal found his way to the poor little garret where Effie Bruce sat singing to herself in the sunshine. After some conversation with her mother, and learning all the particulars he wanted regarding Effie's earliest days, the doctor laid the rejected fee quietly in her hand, thanking her for it, but saying he would rather that it purchased some little comforts for herself and children during so trying a time as her husband's long illness must involve. Great was his surprise when Mrs. Bruce assured him that he must be under some strange mistake, for she had never sent him any such payment, which indeed it was quite out of her power even to think of in present circumstances. In vain Dr. Philip pulled his bushy beard and moustache, trying to recall the interview with that rough lad who brought little Effie. He could not see how he could by any possibility be mistaken.

'Why, I am quite certain the fellow brought it—from you—said he was told to give it to me. Just think again! Haven't you forgotten about it yourself some way or other?'

Agnes Bruce shook her head sadly. She was by no means likely to forget a coin like that. Much more likely, she thought it was, that the doctor, who had so many of them passing through his hands every day, should make some little mistake about it. She thanked him most gratefully, but could not for a moment think of accepting what was so clearly not her own.

While they both stood perplexed, a light step was heard on the threshold, a light tap at the door, and then, without further parley, a bright sweet face looked in—a face that coloured wonderfully when it first caught sight of the other visitor. Dr. Philip, too, on his part started visibly as he recognised Alice Glendinning!

'*You* here!' she was the first to say, looking up with a shy glance of glad surprise.

'And *you*!' he returned with a thrill of pleasure in his tone. It was a long, lingering clasp with which he retained the little gloved hand in his own; and even Agnes Bruce, absorbed as she was with her own concerns, could easily perceive that these two were something more to each other than mere acquaintances.

This new visitor rather prolonged the doctor's stay ; for, of course, the whole story of Effie having been taken over to consult him, under the guardianship of Jock Halliday, had to be gone through ; and then incidental reference was naturally made to the mysterious sovereign, which Dr. Philip still declared must have been sent to him by Mrs. Bruce.

'No me! no me!' exclaimed Agnes Bruce for about the twentieth time. 'An' I canna think whaur that laddie could ever get the lend o' sic a thing at a time like this, when his folk hae jist eneuch to dae to mak ends meet.'

Then Alice Glendinning surprised everybody still more by suddenly clapping her hands as if with joy, and crying out, 'Oh! I know, I know! Yes; I am sure I know all about it.'

'I *thocht* it maun be frae your hoose, Miss Ailice,' cried Agnes Bruce; 'it could be frae nae ither!'

'No, no; it wasn't from us at all! It was poor Jock's own property. I saw him get it. I know how he gained it! And he was so anxious to keep it a secret for a little while, he said. So I promised not to tell! But now *surely* one may!'

And then she proceeded to tell her astonished listeners all about the old brass candlesticks, and Jock's dismay, and Lady Dacres' mania for 'Queen Anne,' and her lavish way of paying for everything, and so on. 'But there is Jock himself, I declare,'

she added at the end of her narrative, 'whistling and racketing on the stair as usual! Home for his dinner, I daresay; just let me bring him in and question him.'

Jock was collared and brought in accordingly, by Miss Glendinning's own fair hands, and there he stood abashed and confounded in the presence of the company, with never a word to say for himself either one way or another. His mother, too, had added herself to the group in an easy, friendly manner, though uninvited; for, as she remarked:

'I cudna think nae ither but ma laddie was in some mischeef again, seein' him brocht up afore this stranger gentleman an' a'. 'Deed, it gaed me a turn, I can tell ye; for though he's an awfu' heap sobered doon since Miss Ailice got a haud o' him, he's a gey throughither kin' o' lad still, oor Jock.'

Mrs. Halliday's mind, however, as well as everybody else's, was soon set at rest on this important subject, especially when Dr. Philip Randal shook Jock warmly by the hand, expressing in the handsomest manner his great regret for having mistaken so fine a fellow and thought him unworthy of confidence. He begged Jock's pardon so heartily, that again our hero felt confused and abashed beyond measure, and at last fairly took refuge in flight. Dr. Philip had managed to slip the aforesaid sovereign once more into the lad's reluctant hand, and Jock

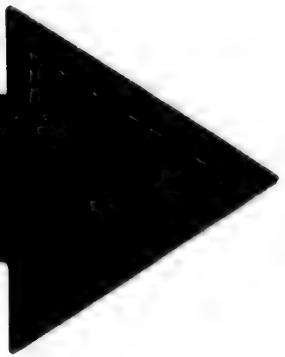
found that after all some other destination must yet be found for it.

As to little Effie's case, the doctor had previously said he would attend to it in time, but that for a long while no steps of any kind could be taken. Only she was to be fed up and strengthened as much as possible, and he did not doubt but that, at some far distant day, the blessing of sight might be restored to her. How thankful they all felt; Jock, not least of all, feeling that the attempt that had cost him so much time and thought and consideration had not after all been in vain.

And Dr. Philip escorted Miss Glendinning home that day. It was an exceedingly busy time of day with him just then, to be sure; but, as he observed, George Square was so very near—hardly a step out of his way. So it might be, perhaps; and yet that hardly accounted for their extending the walk so far as to go round by Bruntsfield Links and St. Catherine's Convent, as they are said to have done!

It is known, however, that the conversation was a particularly interesting one to both parties, leading before long to very important results. But we must not anticipate quite so far as yet.

Before that summer was fairly over, Willie Bruce came home from his long sojourn in the Infirmary. He returned a sadder but a wiser man—broken in health, enfeebled in spirits, but very penitent for the



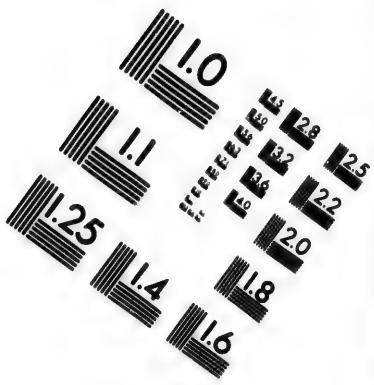
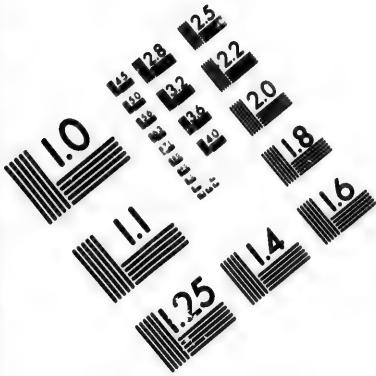
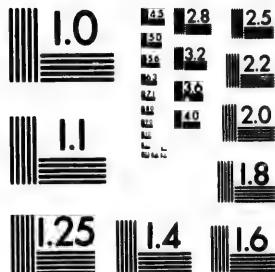
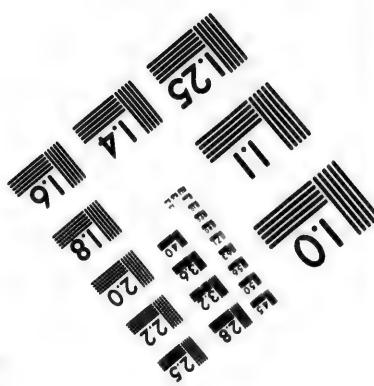
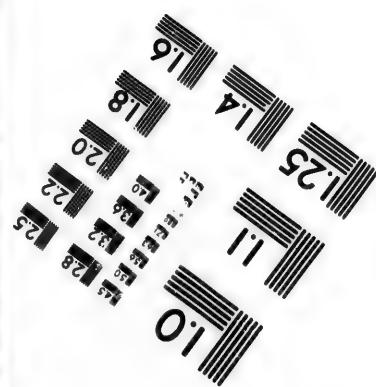


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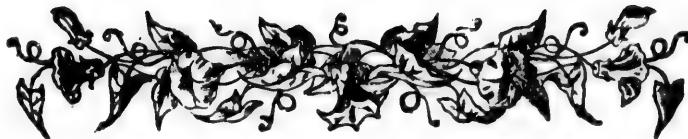
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past, and full of earnest resolves for the future. And he came home not to the poor empty garret and the companionship of Tam Lowrie and his loquacious spouse, but to a neat little cottage with a garden about it in the Grange Loan, which the Largo friends had clubbed together to hire for his wife and children. There Willie began his new and better days, or rather went back to the old pure and simple life he had led before his miserable falling off.

There Effie grew fat, and strong, and rosy, and played about most merrily with her little brother among the daffodils and daisies. There Agnes Bruce became a busy and much-wanted laundress, taking in as much work as she could well accomplish, and sending home the whitest and smoothest of linens by the careful hands of her little blind girl. For Effie could do all that, and more than that! And was not the day coming, at thought of which her little heart beat high, when the bright eyes would look in wonder, and love, and gratitude at the beautiful world around her—at the roses in the garden, at the birds upon the green branches? Nay, more! at the faces of father and mother, brother and friends, and surely—oh! surely—at ‘OOR JOCK’S!’

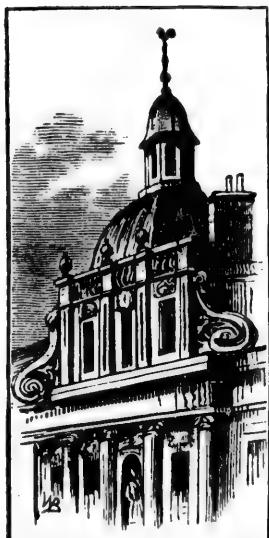
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CHAPTER XXII.

CRISIS AND CONCLUSION.



INFIRMARY TOWER.

TIME passed on with all our Edinburgh friends, as it always does and always must do—very slowly in the eyes of some, very quickly in the eyes of others, but surely and silently, all the same, bringing changes of some sort to everybody. It brought, for one thing, a fair young bride to the great, lonely house in Melville Street, where Mrs. Tucker had once received Jock Halliday and little Effie. That good old lady had retired, on a comfortable pension, to a small flat in the South Side, where Jock sometimes took tea with her, having long ago explained his abrupt departure on that eventful evening when she had declared 'the Scotch had no more manners than pigs had.'

Martha still remained in the service of Dr. Philip Randal, not having found a young man suited to her mind, and being, perhaps, discouraged by Mrs. Tucker's frequently expressed views as to that faithless sex.

When Mr. Towie first learned that Alice Glendinning's destiny was fixed, he felt, to use his own graphic words, 'utterly floored.' But, after a time of mental depression such as he had never before experienced, that 'lang-shankit youth,' as Mrs. Lowrie termed him, buckled on his armour once more, and went forth, like the knights of old, to do battle in a glorious cause. And it was not in vain that he tore up the long, winding stairs—poked through the miry, miserable closes—listened to the stories of the old, and the troubles of the middle-aged, and the difficulties of all. His own sorrow grew not less real, but more easy to bear—he hardly knew how or why. And by and by he was able to reflect that 'bright particular stars' were not in the habit of descending to adorn the common earth, but generally kept aloft somewhere pretty high above *his head!*

And when the time came he was even able to dance at Alice Glendinning's wedding—a feat which he once thought would have killed him; and also to take comfort in the thought that Patricia, the genius of the family, was 'really a first-rate sort of girl.'

Time, the great healer, was to do still more for Mr. Towie. It was to bring him the snug little manse of Crumlauchy, and to set him considering whether genius might not be tempted to try that green retreat. But again we are going too fast. Let us rather look back at some other changes that have occurred in the Grassmarket and its environs.

Mr. Braid the baker, having retired from his old shop in the West Bow—after turning a considerable penny in it—there appeared a new name on the sign-board, nicely painted in blue and gold. The windows were bright—the loaves fresh and well-coloured. The new baker stood laughing in front of his premises one bright May morning ; for his good old mother, well dressed and comfortable-looking, had been quite overjoyed at the sight of the sign-board, and cried out enthusiastically, clapping her hands at the same time, ‘*Weel dune, Oor Jock !*’

And Effie ? It was in a carefully-darkened room in the old Infirmary of Edinburgh that some persons were assembled one afternoon, anxiously waiting the result of a difficult and uncertain operation. A very young girl lay quiet and motionless on the white-covered couch, which had been to her one of pain and agony, in spite of all the appliances known to modern science.

It had been over for some days, but the eyes were

closely bandaged still. Now, at long last, the surgeon's skilful and gentle hand was to remove that bandage and discover—what?

Was it that the soft sunlight of God's fair world fell now upon the long-closed eyes? That the better and sweeter light of loving looks and friendly faces might dawn upon them as these had never done before? Or would it be that the darkness of life-long night had settled once more hopelessly and for ever over those beautiful but shrouded orbs? Who could tell?

It was an anxious moment. Willie Bruce and his wife stood near the bed, hand clasped in hand, trying to think they were prepared for the worst.

There was a young man sitting nearer still, with head bent upon his hands, too much agitated even to look up. It was Jock Halliday.

After a few moments of breathless suspense, Dr. Philip Randal touched this youth and gently motioned him to advance. He did so, and bent his face down towards the white face upon the scarcely whiter pillows. There was no motion, no sign, no glance of recognition. Surely their hope had been in vain!

Dr. Philip looked restlessly at his watch, felt the pulse of his patient, then raised a warning finger. Effie Bruce's sweet blue eyes looked up as they had

never done since her unconscious infancy, and her lips murmured softly, '*Jock! is it you?*'

Had he ever done anything—sacrificed anything for her sake? It was all made up to him in that moment a thousand and a thousand fold!

Poor little Effie! And yet thrice happy too! Among other strange things in her lot this was surely the strangest, that perhaps alone of woman-kind since the days of Eden, her first conscious glance, like that of Mother Eve herself, fell on the face of him who was to be her partner through all the chequered scenes of life. For, farther away in the far distance of time than even the snug manse of Crumlauchy and Mr. Towie's happiness, there rises before us the vision of one well-ordered home, where Effie, grown a sweet and comely matron, duly presides, her bright eyes quick to discern the smallest thorn in the path of husband or children, her skilful hands prompt to remove it. And should she ever be asked what made her home so bright, her lot so happy, those shining eyes would grow dim for a moment, and the ready answer would be, '*Jock, Oor jock!*'

We must leave now those friends of old Edinburgh days, with whom we have companied for a little while. Already they have gone from our sight. Tam Lowrie and his worthy spouse; Jean Campbell,

Lucky Law, and many others have vanished somewhere and somehow in the ceaseless kaleidoscope of human life, only the one central figure of our little story clearly remaining.

I have called him a hero. Is the word too grand, the idea too ridiculous? He was only a baker's boy; only a 'prentice lad; only a common working man. Yet he made many homes better and happier by his efforts and his example. He helped the helpless, cheered the faint-hearted, rescued the drunkard from his miserable fate. He cared for others more than for himself. That is all.

Other heroes have done greater things than these, and yet some of them have little recked to leave burning homesteads and bleeding victims and broken hearts behind them, as they marched proudly on to win the laurel and bind it round their own ambitious brows! And thinking of these things, I, for one, would rather linger over the simpler, homelier picture that I know so well, and would even join with good Mrs. Halliday as she stands gazing at her son's name in blue and gold letters on the new sign-board, and like her clap my hands and say:

'WEEL DUNE! WEEL DUNE! OOR JOCK.'

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